

STENDHAL

*Lucien Leuwen*

(MARIE-HENRI BEYLE)

## THE AUTHOR TO THE READER

### TO THE HAPPY FEW.

Once upon a time there lived in Paris a family that had been preserved from vulgar ideas by the head of the house who, in addition to being a man of much wit, was capable of making up his mind.—LORD BYRON.

### INDULGENT READER:

Listen to the title I give you. In truth, if you were not indulgent and ready to take in good part the words and actions of the serious characters I am about to introduce to you, if you were not willing to pardon the author for his total lack of grandiloquence and moral purpose, etc., etc., I should not advise you to go any further. This story was written with a small number of readers in mind, readers whom I have never seen and whom I shall never see, which is a pity: how I should enjoy spending an evening with them!

With the hope of being read by these few, I have made no effort, I confess, to guard the approaches against ill-natured criticism. To be elegant, academic, and eloquent is beyond my powers; or to add a hundred and fifty pages of periphrastic circumlocutions; a hundred and fifty pages that would only please solemn people predestined to detest writers like the one who now in all humility presents himself to you. It is enough that those worthy personages have been a plague to me in real life without letting them spoil my pleasure when I write for the *Bibliothèque bleu*.

Farewell, friendly reader; try not to spend your life hating and being afraid.

*Cityold*, . . . 1837.

### INDULGENT READER:

Now that we are back in Paris, I shall have to make a great effort to avoid resemblances. Not that I dislike satire—on the contrary! But in focusing the reader's attention on the grotesque figure of some actual Minister, his mind will be bankrupt in interest, and have none left for my other characters. Although most amusing, personal satire is out of place in a work of fiction. The reader becomes entirely engrossed in comparing my character with some unprepossessing or even odious original he knows so well, and will think of him as disgusting or evil according to the way my story depicts him.

When they are true to life and not exaggerated, personal characterizations are charming. But what we have witnessed in the last twenty years is calculated to cure us of this temptation.

"How futile," said Montaigne, "to slander the Inquisition!" In our day he would have said: "How impossible to add anything to the current passion for money, the fear of losing one's job, or eagerness to anticipate one's employer's slightest wish, all things which constitute the soul of those hypocritical speeches of the men who feed upon over fifty thousand francs' worth of the Budget?"

I admit that at over fifty thousand francs private life ceases to be private.

But it is no part of my plan to satirize those happy souls on the Budget! Vinegar is in itself an excellent thing, but mixed with cream it will spoil anything. Therefore, O Indulgent Reader, I have made a great effort to keep you from recogniz-

ing any recent Minister in the one who tried to do Lucien some very ill turns. What possible pleasure would it be for you to have me point out that a particular Minister was a thief, that he was scared to death of losing his job, that he scarcely ever indulged in one word that was not a lie? Such people are really only good for something to their heirs. And since their souls have never known a moment of spontaneity, the view of the interior of those souls would disgust you, O Indulgent Reader, and all the more were I so unfortunate as to make those suave and ignoble features masking their baseness recognizable.

It is quite enough to be forced to see such people mornings when one goes to solicit their favor.

*Non ragioniam di loro, ma guarda e passa.*

## AUTHOR'S FIRST PREFACE

THIS WORK is written simply and straightforwardly, without any surreptitious allusions. It even goes out of its way to avoid a few. But, except in the case of the hero's passion, the author thinks a novel should be a mirror.

If the police render its publication impolitic, it will be postponed for ten years.

*August 2, 1836*

## AUTHOR'S SECOND PREFACE

RACINE was a sly and cowardly hypocrite because he described Nero; just as Richardson, that puritanical and envious printer, was undoubtedly an admirable seducer of women because he invented *Lovelace*. The author of the novel you are about to read, O Indulgent Reader, if you have a great deal of patience, is an enthusiastic republican and a disciple of Robespierre and Couthon. But, at the same time, he longs passionately for the return of the elder branch and the reign of Louis XIX. My publisher assures me that I will be accused of all these fine things, not through any malice, but because of the scant attention Frenchmen give to what they read. It is the fault of the newspapers.

The moment a novel sets out to depict the ways of contemporary society, the reader, even before he becomes familiar with the characters, asks: "What party does this man belong to?" Here is my answer: "The author is simply a moderate partisan of the Charter of 1830. That is why he has dared give detailed examples of both republican and legitimist conversations without lending to those opposing parties any more ab-

surdities than they themselves display, that is, without caricaturing them—a dangerous proceeding which might lead each party to suspect the author of being a rabid partisan of the other.”

The author would not live in a democracy like that of America for anything in the world, because he prefers to pay court to the Minister of the Interior rather than to the corner grocer.

In the case of extremist parties, the last to be observed always seem the most ridiculous. What sorry times when a publisher of a trifling novel must ask the author to write a preface of this kind! Ah, how much better to have been born two and a half centuries ago under Henri IV, in 1600! Old age is the friend of order and afraid of everything. In his old age our man born in 1600 readily put up with the eminently noble despotism of Louis XIV, and that government so admirably depicted for us by the inexorable genius of the Duc de Saint-Simon. Saint-Simon was honest and, in consequence, he was called malicious.

If, by chance, the author of this futile romance has succeeded in being truthful, will he meet with the same reproach? He has done everything in his power not to deserve it in any way. In delineating these characters he has let himself be carried away by the sweet illusions of his art, and his heart has been far indeed from any corroding thought of hate. Between two clever men, the one extremely republican, the other extremely legitimist, the author's secret predilection would be for the one who was most agreeable. Generally speaking, the legitimist would have more elegant manners and a greater store of amusing anecdotes to relate; the republican would have a more passionate soul, his behavior would be more natural and more youthful. After weighing these two opposite sets of qualities, the author, as he has just stated, would prefer

the more amiable of the two; and his preference would in no way be influenced by their political views.

### AUTHOR'S THIRD PREFACE

ONCE upon a time there was a man who had a fever and who had just taken some quinine. Still holding the glass in his hand and making a wry face because of the bitter taste, he happened to look at himself in the mirror and saw that he was very pale and even a little green. He quickly dropped his glass and hurled himself at the mirror.

Such will perhaps be the fate of the following volumes. Unfortunately for them, they do not recount events that happened a hundred years ago; the characters are contemporary; they were, I suppose, still living two or three years ago. Is it the author's fault if some of them are pronounced legitimists, and if others talk like republicans? Will the author stand convicted of being both a legitimist and a republican?

To tell the truth, since we are forced to make a frank confession for fear of worse, the author would be in despair if he had to live under the government of New York. He prefers to pay court to M. Guizot rather than pay court to his boot-maker. In the Nineteenth Century, democracy, of necessity, introduces the reign of mediocre, rational, narrow-minded and *dull* people—that is, from a literary point of view.

*October 21, 1836*

# THE GREEN HUNTSMAN

## CHAPTER ONE

LUCIEN LEUWEN was expelled from the École Polytechnique for having gone for an untimely walk on a day when he, with his fellow students, had been ordered to keep their quarters. It was on one of those famous days of June, 1832.

Some young men, quite mad but endowed with great courage, had been harboring the design of dethroning the king, and the École Polytechnique (which enjoys the displeasure of the Master of the Tuileries) had been officially ordered to stay off the streets. The day after his promenade, Lucien was expelled as a republican. Very much distressed at first, he had, at the end of two years, resigned himself to the misfortune of not having to work twelve hours a day. He spent most of his time very pleasantly at home, for his father, man-about-town and rich banker, had a most agreeable house in Paris.

M. Leuwen, one of the associates of the famous banking house of Van Peters, Leuwen, and Co., feared only two things in this world: humidity and bores. He never lectured his son, never adopted a solemn tone, and, when Lucien left Polytechnique, proposed that he should work at the bank one day a week—Thursdays, the day of the heavy Holland mail. For each Thursday of work, the cashier counted out for Lucien two hundred francs; and from time to time also paid a few little debts, at which M. Leuwen was wont to remark:

“A son is a debtor given us by Nature.”

Sometimes he would tease this debtor.

“Do you know,” he said to Lucien one day, “what will be engraved on your marble tombstone at Père-Lachaise, if we



should have the misfortune of losing you? '*Siste viator!* Here lies Lucien Leuwen, republican, who for two years waged ruthless war on new boots and cigars.' "

At the time when we take up his story, this enemy of cigars had given up all thought of the Republic which was too slow in coming.\* "And besides," he said to himself, "if it amuses Frenchmen to be led monarchically and with a high hand, why disturb them? The majority seem to like this combination of honeyed hypocrisy and lies called *representative government*." †

As his parents did not seek to order his life for him, Lucien spent most of his time in his mother's drawing room. Still young and quite pretty, Madame Leuwen enjoyed the highest consideration; society agreed that she was an infinitely clever woman. But a severe judge might have reproached her for a somewhat excessive delicacy and a too absolute contempt for the arrogance and impudence of our fashionable young gal-lants.

This proud and exceptional spirit did not even deign to express its contempt, and at the slightest sign of vulgarity or affectation, Madame Leuwen would maintain an impenetrable silence. She was rather inclined to take exception to the most innocent things simply because she had encountered them for the first time in people who make too much noise.

The dinners given by M. Leuwen were famous throughout Paris; they were often perfection. On certain days he would entertain the money-makers and power-seekers; but these gentlemen were not included in his wife's circle. Thus M. Leuwen's business in no way spoiled that society in which money was not the only merit and, unbelievable though it may seem, was not considered the greatest of all advantages! In that drawing room where the furnishings had cost a hundred thou-

\* In the opinion of our hero, who is mad and who will change.

† It is a republican speaking.

sand francs, no one hated anyone (strange anomaly!); but everyone liked to laugh and on occasion was not slow to ridicule affectations of every sort, beginning with the king and the archbishop.

As you see, the conversation there was not in the least likely to make for advancement or conquer *fine positions*. In spite of this inconvenience which kept away a great many people who were not missed, the throng was considerable which sought for admission to Madame Leuwen's salon. It would have been the rage had Madame Leuwen been willing to make it more accessible, but one had to combine many different qualifications to be admitted. Madame Leuwen's unique aim was to amuse her husband, who was twenty years older than herself and was said to be on very good terms with the young ladies of the Opera. In spite of this inconvenience and the amenities of her salon, Madame Leuwen was never completely happy unless her husband was present.

In this circle it was agreed that Lucien had an elegant figure, naturalness, and something extremely distinguished in his manners; but here the praise ceased! He was not considered a man of wit. A passion for work, an almost military education, and the free and easy speech of the École Polytechnique had resulted in a total lack of affectation. Each minute he was solely engaged in thinking of what pleased him the most at that very minute, and gave too little thought to *others*.

He regretted the school sword because a very pretty woman, who enjoyed a vogue at the new Court, had said he wore it with an air. . . . He was, moreover, quite tall and rode a horse to perfection. Nice darkish-blond hair prepossessed people in favor of a face that was quite irregular but whose rather large features radiated candor and vivacity. It must be admitted, however, there was nothing overbearing in his manner, he had absolutely nothing of a colonel of a *Gymnase* comedy, still less the tone of importance and calculated arrogance of a

young embassy secretary, nothing in his bearing that said: "My father is worth ten million." Thus our hero did not possess that fashionable appearance which, in Paris, is what makes for three quarters of anyone's good looks. Finally, and this was something quite unpardonable in this starched and stuffy century, Lucien appeared to be perfectly carefree and heedless.

"How you are wasting an admirable position!" Ernest Dévelroy, his cousin and a budding young savant, said to him one day. He was already one of the shining lights of the *Revue de* — and had been promised three votes for the Academy of Moral Sciences.

He was in Lucien's cabriolet when he made this observation, being driven to a soirée at Monsieur N——'s who had been a liberal in 1829, full of sublime and tender thoughts, and who now enjoyed positions worth forty thousand francs, and called republicans the *disgrace of the human race*.

"If you only took things a little more seriously, if you didn't always laugh at the slightest nonsense, you could, in your father's salon or anywhere else as a matter of fact, be one of the foremost among the students of the École Polytechnique expelled for their opinions. Look at your fellow-student Coffe, expelled like you, poor as Job, admitted only out of charity to your mother's drawing room at first; and yet what consideration he now enjoys among all those millionaires and peers of France! His secret is simple enough, anyone can borrow it: he has a solemn manner and never opens his mouth. You really should adopt a rather somber air sometimes. All men of your age try to make people think they're important. You, my poor fellow, through no fault of yours, succeeded in twenty-four hours and you cheerfully fling your advantage away. To see you one would think you were a child and, what's worse, a contented child. I warn you, people are beginning to take you at your word, and in spite of your father's millions, you count for nothing; you have no importance, you are nothing but a

nice schoolboy, which at twenty is really a bit ridiculous; and to complete your ruin, you spend hours over your toilet, and everybody knows it."

"To satisfy you," said Lucien, "one should play a part, I suppose? And what a *sad* part! But what would society give me in return for my boredom? With never a moment's relief from this tedium. And wouldn't I be obliged to listen with a straight face to Marquis D——'s long homilies on political economy, and the lamentations of Abbé R—— on the infinite dangers of partition among brothers, provided by the Civil Code? In the first place, perhaps these gentlemen do not even know what they are talking about; and in the second place, which is more probable, they would laugh heartily at the idiot who believed them."

"Well then, refute them, start a discussion, the gallery will be with you. Who said to agree with them? Only be grave. Play a serious role."

"I should be too afraid that in a week the *serious role* would become a habit. What do I care for the world's opinion? I'm not asking it for anything. I wouldn't give three louis to be a member of your Academy; haven't we just seen how M. B—— was elected?"

"But, sooner or later, you will be called to account to the world for the place it accords you on faith, because of your father's millions. If your independence excites the world's displeasure, it will find some way of hurting you. One day it will take it into its head to turn a cold shoulder. Having always been accustomed to being received with open arms, I can imagine your despair, but it will be too late. Then you will feel the necessity of being somebody, of belonging to a group that will stand by you if necessary, and you will frantically take up horse-racing; for my part, I find it less silly to be an Academician."

The sermon came to an end as Ernest got down at the door of the renegade who held twenty offices. "He's fantastic, my

cousin," thought Lucien, "just like Madame X who insists that it is important for me to go to Mass: '*It is absolutely indispensable, especially for the heir to a great fortune who is without a great name.*' By gad, I'd be an awful fool to do things that bore me! And who pays any attention to what I do in Paris?"

Six weeks after Ernest Dévelroy's sermon, Lucien was pacing up and down his room. His eye traced with scrupulous attention all the arabesques of a sumptuous Turkish carpet which Madame Leuwen had had taken from her own room one day when her son was confined to his room with a cold. On the present occasion, Lucien wore a magnificent and bizarre dressing-gown in blue and gold, with nice warm pantaloons of magenta cashmere.

He seemed happy in this costume, there was a smile on his face. Each time he turned he would glance a little to one side, but without stopping, and each time his glance would fall on the sofa; on the sofa lay a green coat with magenta pipings; to this coat were attached the epaulets of a second-lieutenant.

And therein lay happiness!

## CHAPTER TWO

SINCE M. LEUWEN, that famous banker, gave dinners of rare distinction, really almost perfect, and since he was neither moral, boring, nor ambitious, but only fantastic and original, he had a great many friends. However, through a grave error on his part, he never chose his friends with a view to augmenting the prestige he enjoyed and his importance in the world. They were, first of all, men of wit who liked to enjoy themselves, who perhaps worked seriously

every morning at increasing their fortunes but at night laughed at the world in general, went to the Opera, and, above all, tried not to pry too closely into the origins of power; for if they had, it would have been necessary for them to get indignant, denounce and be dull.

His friends had told the reigning minister that Lucien was not a *Hampden*, neither a fanatic on the subject of American freedom nor a man to object to taxes even without the budget, but simply a young man of twenty with the same opinions as everybody else. The result was that for the last thirty-six hours Lucien was a second-lieutenant of the Twenty-seventh Regiment of Lancers, which has uniforms with magenta pipings and is, in addition, famous for its shining valor.

"Perhaps I should have chosen the Ninth which also had a vacancy," Lucien debated with himself as he gaily lighted a cigar he had just rolled in licorice paper sent to him from Barcelona. "The Ninth has canary-yellow pipings . . . that is gayer . . . yes, but less distinguished, less sober, less military. . . . Military! Bah! Regiments paid by a Chamber of Commons will never fight. The important thing in a uniform is that it should look attractive at a ball, and canary-yellow is certainly gayer. . . .

"How I have changed! When I put on my first uniform to enter Polytechnique, how little I cared what color it was; I was thinking of splendid batteries quickly set up under the fire of the thundering Prussian artillery. . . . Who knows, perhaps my Twenty-seventh Regiment of Lancers will one day charge those *hussars of death* whom Napoleon praised in his Jéna bulletin! . . . But to fight with joy, one must feel that one's country is really interested in the combat; if it's only for the sake of this '*halt in the mud*' that has encouraged foreigners in their insolence,\* faith, it's not worth it!"

\* This young man still speaks the language of his party: this is a republican speaking.

And the idea of facing danger and fighting like a hero lost all its glamor. Because of his beloved uniform he tried to think of all the advantages of the calling: getting promoted, being decorated, money . . . "Come now, why not pillage Spain and Germany at once and have done with it, like N—— or N——!"

His lip curling in profound disgust, he let his cigar fall to the sumptuous carpet his mother had given him. Hastily he picked it up; his mood changed; his contempt for war had vanished.

"After all," he thought, "neither Russia nor the other despotisms will ever forgive the *Three Days*. So it would be a fine thing to fight."

His confidence now restored, after that ignoble momentary contact with the specialists in emoluments, his eyes once more turned in the direction of the sofa where the tailor had spread out his second-lieutenant's uniform. He imagined war from what he had seen of cannon drill in the Park of Vincennes.

He might be wounded! But then he saw himself transported to a thatched cottage in Swabia or Italy and a charming young girl whose language he could not understand nursing him, at first out of simple humanity—but then . . . When his youthful imagination had exhausted all the joys of making love to a fresh innocent peasant girl, it was a young woman of the court exiled on the banks of the Sezia by a churlish husband. First she sent her footman to bring bandages to the young wounded officer, and a few days later she herself appeared leaning on the arm of the village priest.

"But no," went on Lucien, frowning and thinking of all the pleasantries M. Leuwen had heaped on him since yesterday, "I'll never make war on anything but cigars. I'll become the pillar of the military café in some dreary ill-paved little garrison town; my evening diversions will be billiards and beer, and sometimes in the morning we'll wage war with rotten cabbages on dirty workmen who are dying of hunger.

. . . At the most, like Pyrrhus, I'll be killed by a chamber-pot thrown by some toothless hag out of a fifth-story window! What glory! How disconcerted my soul will be when I am presented to Napoleon in the next world, and he says: 'You must have been dying of hunger to engage in this profession?'—'No, General, I wanted to follow in your footsteps.'" And Lucien burst out laughing. . . . "Our leaders are not firmly enough seated in the saddle to risk a real war. One fine morning a corporal like Hoche will rise from the ranks, and will say to the soldiers: 'Friends, let's march on Paris and make a consul who will not let himself be made a laughingstock by Nicholas.'

"But I want the corporal to succeed," Lucien philosophically continued as he relighted his cigar. "Once the nation is roused to anger and in love with glory, farewell liberty! The journalist who raised any doubts about the bulletin of the last battle would be treated as a traitor, ally of the enemy, and massacred in imitation of the republicans of America. Once more we would turn our backs on liberty for the sake of glory. . . . Vicious circle . . . and so *ad infinitum*."

It can be seen that our second-lieutenant was not altogether exempt from that disease of *excessive reasoning* which cripples the youth of our time, turning them into old women. "However that may be," he suddenly exclaimed as he tried on his uniform and looked at himself in the glass, "everybody says that one has to be something. Very well, I will be a *lancer*; when I have learned my calling I shall have accomplished my purpose, then come what may."

That evening as Lucien, wearing epaulets for the first time in his life, passed the sentinels at the Tuileries, they presented arms; he was wild with joy. Ernest Dévelroy, who was a *born intriguer* and knew everybody, took him to meet the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Twenty-seventh Lancers, M. Filloteau, who was passing through Paris.



In a room on the third floor of a house on the Rue du Bouloi, Lucien, whose heart was pounding and who expected to see a hero, found a man of short stature and wary eye, with great blond side-whiskers, carefully combed, spreading over his cheeks. Lucien was stupefied. "My God!" he thought, "this man is just a pettifogger from Lower Normandy!" He stood gaping in front of M. Filloteau who, in vain, asked him *to have the goodness to be seated*. Between every other word of the conversation, this brave soldier of Austerlitz and of Marengo, always managed to interpolate: *my fidelity to the king, or the necessity of suppressing factionists*.

After ten minutes, which seemed like a century, Lucien fled. He walked so rapidly that Dévelroy had difficulty keeping up with him.

"Great God! Do you call that a hero?" Lucien finally burst out, stopping abruptly. "Why, he's nothing but a military policeman, a tyrant's cut-throat paid to kill his fellow citizens, and glorying in it!"

The future Academician saw things in an entirely different light, and on a less exalted plane.

"What do you mean by making such a face? You look as though someone had given you some rotten *pâté de Strasbourg*. Do you or don't you want to amount to something in the world?"

"My God, what ruffraff!"

"This lieutenant-colonel is worth a hundred of you. He is a peasant who, by making good use of his sword for anyone who paid him, bagged those epaulets with bullion fringe."

"But he's so coarse, so disgusting! . . ."

"All the more credit to him! It was by disgusting his superiors, if they were worth more than he, that he forced them to favor the advancement he enjoys today. And you, my worthy republican, have you ever earned a penny in your life? You simply took the trouble to get born like the son of a prince.

Your father gives you everything you need. Without that, where would you be? Aren't you ashamed, at your age, not to be able to earn so much as the price of a cigar?"

"But such a vile creature! . . ."

"Vile or not, he's a thousand times superior to you; he has done something, while you have done nothing. The man who, while catering to the passions of the strong, picks up enough pennies to buy himself a cigar, or who, stronger than the weak who are in possession of the money-bags, gets hold of those pennies, may or may not be vile—we'll discuss that later—but he is strong; he's *a man*. You may despise him but first of all you have to reckon with him. You are nothing but a child who counts for nothing, who has discovered some fine phrases in a book and repeats them gracefully like a good actor who knows his part; but as for action—zero! Before despising a coarse Auvergnac peasant who, in spite of his repulsive physiognomy, is no longer a peddler on a street corner, but receives the official visit of M. Lucien Leuwen, a handsome young Parisian and son of a millionaire, just think of the difference in merit between you and him. M. Filloteau probably supports his old peasant father, while your father supports you."

"Oh, you will certainly be a member of the Institute before long!" cried Lucien in despairing tones. "As for me, I'm a fool. You are right, a thousand times right! I see that, I feel it, but I am very much to be pitied. I have a horror of the door through which I shall have to pass. There's too much filth under that door! Good-by."

And Lucien turned on his heels. He was glad that Ernest did not follow him. He rushed upstairs to his room and flung his uniform down furiously in the middle of the floor. "God knows what it will force me to do!"

A few moments later he went down to see his father and embraced him with tears in his eyes.

"Ah, I see how it is," said M. Leuwen in surprise, "you have

lost a hundred louis, I'll give you two hundred; but I don't like your way of asking; I'd rather not see tears in the eyes of a second-lieutenant. Shouldn't a valiant soldier think first of all of the effect he is making on his neighbors?"

"Our clever cousin Dévelroy has just been giving me a dressing down. He has convinced me that my only merit is having taken the trouble to get born the son of a man of brains; that by my own wits I have never earned so much as the price of a cigar; that, if it weren't for you, I'd be in the poorhouse."

"And so you don't want a hundred louis?" asked M. Leuwen.

"I already owe much too much to your generosity. What would I be without you?"

"The devil take you," M. Leuwen cried energetically. "Are you becoming a Saint-Simonist, by any chance? What a bore you're going to be!"

Lucien's emotion, which he was unable to hide, began to amuse his father in the end.

"I insist," said M. Leuwen, suddenly interrupting as the clock began striking nine, "that this very moment you go and occupy my box at the Opera. There you will find some young ladies who are worth three or four of you; for, first of all, they didn't take any trouble getting born, and, what's more, on the days they dance they earn fifteen or twenty francs. I insist that you take them to supper in my name, as my deputy, you understand? You will entertain them at the *Rocher de Cancale*, where you will spend at least two hundred francs. Otherwise I disown you, pronounce you a Saint-Simonist, and forbid your seeing me for six months. What a punishment for such a loving son!"

Lucien had a downright fit of tenderness toward his father.

"Do your friends consider me an awful bore?" he asked sensibly enough. "I swear to you that I'll spend your two hundred francs very well."

"God be praised! And remember that nothing could be more

ill-mannered than to burst in like this and to begin talking about serious things to a poor man of sixty-five, who has never given you the slightest excuse to come loving him furiously in this way. Devil take you, you'll never be anything but a dreary republican. I am astonished that you haven't greasy hair and a dirty beard."

Somewhat nettled, Lucien made himself agreeable to the young ladies he found in his father's box. At supper he was very lively and poured them champagne with charming grace. After seeing them to their door, as he drove home alone in a cab at one o'clock in the morning, he wondered at his display of emotion earlier in the evening. "I must be careful of my first impulses," he said to himself. "I'm not sure of anything about myself. My affection only succeeded in shocking my father. . . . I should never have foreseen that. I need action. I'd better join my regiment."

The next morning at seven o'clock he presented himself in uniform, and alone, at the door of Lieutenant-Colonel Filoteau's uninviting room. There, for two hours he had the courage to pay court to the old soldier. He made a serious effort to accustom himself to military ways. He imagined that all his fellow officers would have the tone and manners of Filoteau. An unbelievable illusion but one which had its advantages. What he saw shocked him, mortally offended him. "But I'll go through with it," he said courageously. "I will not make fun of their manners and I will imitate them."

Lieutenant-Colonel Filoteau talked about himself—talked a great deal. He told at length how he had obtained his first epaulets in Egypt in the first battle under the walls of Alexandria. The account was magnificent and moved Lucien deeply. But the old soldier, having been spoiled by fifteen years of Restoration, was not revolted by the sight of a *Paris dandy* walking into a lieutenancy without lifting a finger. Calculation having taken the place of heroism in his mind, he began

reckoning the advantages to be derived from this young man. He asked Lucien if his father were a deputy.

M. Filloteau declined Madame Leuwen's invitation to luncheon, conveyed to him by Lucien. But two days later he did not hesitate to accept a superb pipe with meerschaum bowl encased in massive silver. Filloteau had received it from Lucien's hands as a due, and without the least gratitude.

"This," he said to himself, when he had closed the door on Lucien, "means that our dandy, once he's in the regiment, will be asking frequent leaves to go and squander his money in the neighboring town. . . . And," he added, weighing the heavy silver of the pipe in his hand, "you will obtain those leaves, M. Leuwen, and you will obtain them entirely through *me*; you won't catch me passing up a client like that; the popinjay must have five hundred francs a month to spend; his father was certainly in the commissariat during the wars; all that money has been stolen from the poor soldier. . . . Confiscated," he said, smiling to himself. And hiding the pipe under a pile of shirts in the bureau drawer, he removed the key.

### CHAPTER THREE

A HUSSAR in 1794, at the age of eighteen, Filloteau had taken part in all the campaigns of the Revolution. For the first six years he had fought with enthusiasm, singing the *Marseillaise*. But Bonaparte made himself consul, and soon all the future lieutenant-colonel's wily common sense told him that it was inept to keep on singing the *Marseillaise*. He was also the first lieutenant in his regiment to obtain the Cross. Under the Bourbons he took his first communion and became an officer of the *Legion d'Honneur*. Now he had come

to spend three days in Paris to remind some of his subaltern friends of his existence, while the Twenty-seventh Regiment of Lancers was on its way from Nantes to Lorraine. Had Lucien been wiser in the ways of the world, he would have spoken of the esteem his father enjoyed with the War Office. But such things never occurred to Lucien. Like a restive young horse he saw perils which did not exist, but he also found plenty of courage to brave them.

Having found out that M. Filloteau was leaving the following day by diligence to rejoin his regiment, Lucien asked permission to travel in his company. Madame Leuwen was very much surprised when she saw her son's calash, which she had had stationed under her windows, being unloaded, and all his luggage being sent off to the diligence.

During the very first meal together, the Colonel, seeing Lucien take up a newspaper, reprimanded him sharply.

"In the Twenty-seventh there is a standing order of the day which forbids the officers of this regiment reading the newspapers in public places; there is only one exception—the government's official paper."

"The devil take the paper!" cried Lucien gaily. "Let's try our luck at dominoes and see who is to pay for the punch this evening—that is, if the horses aren't ready yet."

Young though he was, Lucien nevertheless had sense enough to lose six games running, and when they got back into their coach the brave Filloteau had been completely won over. He found that there was something to be said for this young fop after all, and began explaining to him how he should behave so as not to be taken for a greenhorn. Such behavior was just about the contrary of the exquisite politeness to which Lucien was accustomed. For, in the eyes of the Filloteaus of the world (as among monks) exquisite politeness was regarded as a weakness; one must, above all, talk about oneself and all one's advantages, one must exaggerate. As our

hero was listening sadly and with great attention, Filloteau fell asleep and left him free to dream at his leisure. On the whole Lucien was delighted to be doing something active and seeing something new.

Two days later, at six in the morning, about three leagues this side of Nancy, our gentlemen caught up with the regiment. They had the diligence stop and deposit them and all their effects on the highroad.

Lucien, who was all eyes, was struck by the air of churlish and vulgar importance that came over the broad countenance of the Lieutenant-Colonel when his orderly opened a port-manteau and took out his uniform with its great epaulets. M. Filloteau had ordered a horse brought for Lucien, and the two of them rejoined the regiment, which had gone on while they were donning their uniforms. Seven or eight officers had taken their place at the extreme rear in honor of their lieutenant-colonel, and to these Lucien was first presented. He found them extremely cold. Nothing could have been less encouraging than the expression of their faces.

"So it's people like these I shall have to live with!" thought Lucien with a lump in his throat like a child. Accustomed as he was to the faces animated by civility and a desire to please in the people he encountered in Paris drawing rooms, Lucien even went so far as to think that the young gentlemen in question were affecting this manner on purpose to discountenance him. He talked too much and nothing he said was allowed to pass without objection or challenge. He stopped talking.

For an hour, without saying a word, Lucien rode on the left of the captain commanding the squadron to which he was to belong. His manner was distant, at least he hoped it was, but his heart was bursting with emotion. The disagreeable dialogue with the officers was hardly at an end before he had completely forgotten their existence. He was absorbed in watch-

ing the lancers and found himself transported with joy and astonishment. So these were the companions of Napoleon! So this is the French soldier! He scrutinized the smallest detail, with a ridiculous and passionate interest.

His first transports somewhat moderated, he examined his own situation. "Here I am, provided with a profession, and a profession which is considered the noblest of all and the most amusing. The *École Polytechnique* would have mounted me with the artillery officers; here I am with the lancers." And he added with a smile, "The only difference is that instead of knowing my trade exceptionally well, I don't know it at all." The captain riding beside him noticed this smile which was more tender than mocking and was annoyed by it. . . . "Bah!" continued Lucien to himself, "Desaix and Saint-Cyr began the same way; those heroes who were not spoiled by dukedoms." \*

He could hear the lancers talking among themselves and began to listen to what they were saying. Their conversation was commonplace enough: the quality of their soldier bread, the price of wine, etc., etc. But the frank tone of their voices, the lusty sincerity that shone through every word, fortified his soul like the air of the mountains. There was something simple and unspoiled about them, quite different from the hot-house atmosphere in which he had been living. To feel the difference and to change his whole outlook on life was the matter of a moment. In place of that very agreeable but at bottom very cautious and timorous civility, the tone of these remarks all gaily proclaimed: "I count on myself and to hell with the world!"

"These are really the frankest, the most sincere and perhaps the happiest men in the world!" thought Lucien. "Why shouldn't one of their officers be like them? Like them I'm frank and say what I think; my only thought would be to

\* A republican is speaking.



contribute to their comfort; after all I really don't give a damn for anything but my own self-respect. As for these pretentious individuals with their cutting and conceited airs who are called my comrades-in-arms, I have nothing in common with them but my epaulets." Out of the corner of his eye he stole a glance at the captain on his right and the lieutenant on the right of the captain. "These gentlemen form a perfect contrast to the lancers. They spend their time acting and, except for death, they are afraid of everything; they are exactly like my cousin Dévelroy."

Lucien once more turned his attention to the lancers, listening to them with delight. Soon his soul was soaring in imaginary space. He keenly relished this sensation of freedom and generosity, and saw nothing but the splendid things to be accomplished, the magnificent dangers. The necessity for intrigue and a life as envisaged by his cousin Dévelroy for him had been forgotten. The idle talk of these soldiers had on him the exhilarating effect of good music; life took on a roseate hue.

Suddenly, between the two rows of lancers who were going along at a walk, slouching in their saddles, the adjutant came riding at a fast trot down the middle of the road. He said something in a low voice to the non-commissioned officers, and Lucien saw the lancers straighten up in their saddles. "How splendid they look now!" he thought.

His young and naïve countenance could not conceal so lively an emotion; gladness and kindness were written all over it, and perhaps a little curiosity too. This was a great mistake on his part. He should have remained impassive, or better still have assumed an expression contrary to the one that was expected of him. The captain on whose left he was riding immediately thought to himself: "My fine young man is about to ask me a question and I shall put him in his place with a *well seasoned* reply." But not for anything in the world would Lucien have asked his so uncomradely comrades anything. He

tried to guess for himself the word that, all at once, had given the lancers such an air of alertness, and, in one second, changed the happy-go-lucky negligence of a long march into all the nobility of military bearing.

The captain kept waiting for a question from Lucien. At last, he could endure the continued silence of the young Parisian no longer.

"It is the Inspector-General we are waiting for, General Count N——, a Peer of France," he finally explained with a cold haughty air and without seeming to be addressing his remarks to Lucien specially.

Lucien looked at the captain coldly and as though merely aroused by the sound of his voice. This heroic soldier's lips were pursed in an outrageous pout; his forehead bore a self-important frown; his eyes, turned ever so slightly to the left, were carefully *not* looking directly at our second-lieutenant.

"What a ludicrous animal," thought Lucien. "Apparently this is that military tone about which Filloteau has had so much to say! Just to please these gentlemen I am certainly not going to adopt such rude and vulgar manners. I shall always be a stranger among them. It may cost me some swordplay, but I am not going to reply to any remark made in such a tone." The captain evidently was expecting some deferential exclamation such as: "You don't mean the famous Count N——, the General so honorably mentioned in the bulletins of the Grand Army?"

But our hero was on his guard. His face continued to have the expression of someone exposed to a bad smell. After a moment of painful silence, and scowling more than ever, the captain was forced to add:

"It was Count N—— who made that magnificent charge at Austerlitz; his carriage will soon come past us. Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin, who is not so stupid, at the last relay slipped

the postillions a crown; one of them has just now galloped up! The lancers are not to form ranks—that would look pre-arranged. Think what a good impression the inspector will have of the regiment; one should never neglect first impressions. . . . Look at them—those men were born in the saddle!”

Lucien replied only with a nod. He was ashamed of the gait of the old nag they had given him; he let it feel his spurs; it jumped and nearly fell down. “I look like one of our *cabbage-cutter* brothers,” he thought to himself.

Ten minutes later they could hear the rumbling of a heavily loaded vehicle and Count N—— came driving along the middle of the highway between the two lines of lancers. Soon his carriage passed Lucien and the captain, but his enormous berlin was so piled high with packages of every size and shape that they did not get even a glimpse of the famous general.

“Case upon case, a caisson,” remarked the captain bitterly. “They can’t stir without their hams, roasts, turkeys and *pâté de foie gras*, to say nothing of quantities of champagne.”

Our hero was forced to reply. And while he is thus engaged with Captain Henriet in the distasteful task of politely returning arrogance for arrogance, we ask permission to turn our attention for an instant to the Lieutenant-General, Count N——, Peer of France, who is this year charged with the inspection of the Third Military Division. . . .

At the moment his carriage rolled over the drawbridge into Nancy, headquarters of the division, seven salvos announced this signal event to the populace.

The sound of the cannon once more sent Lucien’s soul soaring into the seventh heaven.

Two sentinels were placed at the inspector’s door, and Lieutenant-General Baron Thérance, commander of the division, sent to ask if Count N—— wished to see him at once, or on the following day.

"At once, by God!" said the old general. "Do you think I'm here just to f—— discipline?"

With respect to detail, Count N—— still retained the habits of the army of Sambre-et-Meuse in which he had first made a reputation for himself. These habits were all the more vividly present in his mind since, more than once during the last five or six stages, he had recognized positions which that army of such untarnished fame had formerly occupied.

Although he was certainly not an imaginative man, nor one with many illusions, he caught himself being stirred by memories of 1792. "What a difference between '92 and 183—! Great God, how we used to swear eternal enmity to royalty! And with what conviction! These young non-coms whom Soult has recommended so particularly to my care, why they are ourselves of those days all over again. . . . At that time we used to fight every day; it was an agreeable calling; we liked to fight. Today you have to pay court to a Marshal and Judge in a Court of Peers!"

A rather handsome man of sixty-five or -six, tall and thin, with an erect carriage and finished manners, the General still had a waistline, and a few carefully tended curls between blond and gray gave a certain grace to an otherwise perfectly bald head. His face revealed a steadfast courage and a firm resolve to obey, but was, in every other respect, a total stranger to thought.

It was a face that was much less pleasing at second glance and seemed almost common at the third; there was a vague aura of duplicity about it. One could see that the Empire and its servility had passed that way.

Happy the heroes who died before 1804!

These old figures of the army of Sambre-et-Meuse had been softened in the ante-chambers of the Tuileries and at the ceremonies in Notre-Dame. The Count N—— had seen General Delmas exiled after the famous dialogue:

"What a splendid ceremony, Delmas! Really superb!" said the Emperor on his return from Notre-Dame.

"You are right, General, nothing was missing except the two million men who died to overthrow what you have just restored."

The next day Delmas was ordered never to come within forty leagues of Paris.

When the valet announced Baron Thérance, General N—, who had donned his dress uniform, was pacing the floor still hearing in his imagination the liberating cannon of Valenciennes. Quickly he dismissed all these memories which might so easily lead to indiscretions. And now, for the sake of the reader, as is said by those who hawk the King's speech at the opening of the session, we shall report the dialogue that took place between the two old generals. They knew each other only slightly.

As he entered, Baron Thérance bowed awkwardly. Almost six feet tall he had the look of a Franc-Comtois peasant. Moreover, at the battle of Hanau, where Napoleon had been forced to pierce the ranks of his faithful Bavarian allies to get back to France, Colonel Thérance, who with his battalion covered General Drouot's famous battery, had received a saber blow that had slashed both his cheeks and cut off a bit of his nose. The damage had been more or less repaired, but was still very plain, and this enormous scar across a face furrowed by a perpetual state of dissatisfaction, gave the General a very military air. During the war he had shown extraordinary bravery, but after Napoleon's reign all his boldness had collapsed. On the pavements of Nancy everything terrified him and, above all else, the newspapers. His constant nightmare was the fear of being held up to public ridicule. The dullest pleasantry in a paper with barely a hundred subscribers would put this brave soldier in a panic. He had another vexation: nobody in Nancy

paid the slightest attention to his epaulets. He thought himself detested by the youth of the city to whom he had given pretty rough treatment during the riots of 183-.

This once happy man now introduced his aide-de-camp who immediately retired. He then spread out on the table a plan of the disposition of the troops and the hospitals of the division. An hour at least was spent over military details. The General questioned the Baron about the soldiers' frame of mind, about the non-commissioned officers, and from there to the attitude of the inhabitants was but a step. It must be admitted that the replies of the worthy commander of the Third Division would seem pretty long if we set them down with all the flourishes of military rhetoric. We shall therefore content ourselves with the conclusions which Count N——, Peer of France, drew from the remarks, so full of bitterness, of the General of the province.

"Here is a man who is honor itself," thought the Count. "He does not fear death. He even complains, and with all his heart, of the absence of danger. He is, nevertheless, completely demoralized, and if he were called upon to put down an uprising now, his fear of next morning's papers would drive him crazy."

"I am forced to swallow humiliations all day long," repeated the Baron.

"But you must not say it too loud, my dear General; there are twenty general officers, your seniors, soliciting your place. And the Marshal insists on everybody being happy. I am going to repeat to you frankly, as a friend, a remark addressed to me by the Minister—a bit strong, I admit: '*Only an imbecile,*' he said to me a week ago as I was taking leave of him, '*can't make a nest for himself anywhere.*'"

"I should like to see the Marshal here in Nancy," replied the Baron with impatience, "between a rich and thoroughly

united aristocracy that openly despises us, and a bourgeoisie led by Jesuits, keen as razors, who control all the women with any money. On the other hand, all the young men of this town who are neither noble nor pious—rabid republicans! If my glance happens to fall on one of them he holds up a *pear*, or some other seditious emblem. Even schoolboys display *pears* for my benefit; and if I happen to be a couple of hundred feet away from my sentinels, the young men hiss outrageously; then later I receive an anonymous letter in which I am offered satisfaction, but should I refuse, the writer covers me with the most fiendish insults. . . . And the anonymous letter always contains a slip of paper with the name and address of the writer. Do you have anything like that in Paris? And if I meet with an affront, the next day everybody is talking and laughing about it. Only the day before yesterday, a very brave ex-officer whose servant had, by chance, been killed during the affair of April 3rd, offered to draw pistols with me outside division limits. Well, yesterday this piece of insolence was the talk of the whole town!”

“In that case a letter to the King’s Attorney-General is in order. Does he fail to show the proper energy?”

“He’s driven by the devil himself! Being related to the Minister he is sure of promotion with the first political suit that comes up. I made the mistake of going to him a few days after the riots with an atrocious anonymous letter—the first I’d ever received in my life, by gad! ‘What do you expect me to do with this rag?’ he asked coldly. ‘I’m the one who would call on your protection, General, if I had been insulted like this, or else take justice into my own hands.’ Sometimes I am tempted to take a slice off the noses of these insolent civilians with my saber!”

“And bid farewell to your post!”

“Ah! If I could only turn the guns on them!” cried the

brave old General with a deep sigh, and raising his eyes to heaven.

"Eh! to be sure," replied the Peer of France. "It has always been my way of thinking. To the cannon of Saint-Roche Napoleon owed the tranquillity of his reign. And has not your prefect, M. Fléron, advised the Minister of the Interior of the temper of the public?"

"Oh, as to that, he scribbles all day long. But he's a child, a hothead of twenty-eight who tries to play the fox with me, is eaten up with vanity and is as timorous as a woman. There's no use my saying to him: 'Come, let's drop these rivalries of prefect and general till happier times. You and I are vilified all day long and by everybody. Has Monsignor, the Bishop, for instance, returned our calls? Does the aristocracy come to your balls or invite you to theirs? And if, according to instructions, we take advantage of certain business relations to bow to a nobleman at the General Council, he returns the bow the first time only, afterwards he is always careful to turn his head the other way. As for the young republicans, they look straight at us and hiss.' All this is perfectly plain. And, believe it or not, the Prefect denies it. 'Speak for yourself,' red in the face with anger, he answers me. 'No one has ever hissed me!' And yet not a week goes by that he isn't hissed two paces away, if he dares appear on the street after dark."

"But are you perfectly sure of this, my dear General? The Minister of the Interior showed me ten letters from M. Fléron in which he represents himself as being on the point of becoming completely reconciled with the Legitimist Party. M. G——, the prefect of N—— with whom I dined day before yesterday, is on fairly good terms with them, and that I saw for myself."

"By God, I believe you! He is a clever man, an excellent prefect, a friend of all the clever thieves, and himself steals



thirty thousand francs a year without being caught, which makes him respected in the province. But since what I report of my prefect may be looked upon with a certain suspicion, allow me to send for Captain B——. You know him? He must be in the ante-room.”

“He is, if I am not mistaken, the observer sent to the One Hundred and Seventh to report on the temper of the garrison.”

“Exactly! He has only been here three months and, in order not to compromise him in his regiment, I make a point of never seeing him by day.”

Captain B—— appeared. As soon as he entered, Baron Thérance insisted on retiring to another room. The Captain confirmed, with a thousand instances, each of the poor General’s complaints. “In this cursed city the youth is republican, the nobility thoroughly united and devout. M. Gauthier, editor of the liberal paper and leader of the republicans, is determined and clever. M. Du Poirier, who directs the nobility, is an old fox of the first order with a bewildering fund of energy. Everybody makes game of the Prefect and the General; they are kept out of everything; they don’t count at all. The Bishop periodically announces to his whole congregation that we will be out in three months. I am delighted, Monsieur le Comte, to acquit myself of my responsibility. The trouble is that if one writes quite plainly about all this to the Marshal, he replies that one is lacking in zeal. Very convenient for him in case of a change of dynasty . . .”

“Enough, sir!”

“I beg your pardon, General, I forgot myself. Here the Jesuits order the nobility around like charwomen, everybody in fact except the republicans.”

“What is the population of Nancy?” the General hastened to ask, finding the Captain’s report far too frank.

“Eighteen thousand inhabitants not counting the garrison.”

"How many republicans have you?"

"Acknowledged republicans, thirty-six."

"That is two for every thousand. And among them, how many with brains?"

"Only one, Gauthier, the surveyor and editor of the *Aurore*. He is poor and glories in his poverty."

"And you mean to tell me that you can't control thirty-five whipper-snappers and lock up the brains?"

"But let me explain, sir. Just as the aristocrats consider it the proper thing to be religious, all those who are not religious think it smart to imitate the republicans in all their crazy notions. There is that Café Montor, frequented by the youngsters of the opposition. It is just like a club of '93. If four or five soldiers pass by, these gentlemen cry under their breath: *Long live the Line!* If a non-com appears they hail him, talk to him, try to get him to drink with them. But when it's an officer like myself belonging to the government, they heap him with every covert insult imaginable and he has to put up with it. Only last Sunday when I happened to pass the Café Montor, they all, with one movement like soldiers on parade, turned their backs on me; I was terribly tempted to give them a kick in their you-know-what."

"That would have been a sure way of getting put on the unattached list by return post. Aren't you well paid?"

"I receive a thousand-franc note every six months. It was only because I wasn't thinking that I strolled past the Café Montor. Ordinarily I go way out of my way to avoid the cursed café. And to think that an officer, wounded at Dresden and at Waterloo, should be obliged to dodge a pack of civilians!"

"Since the *Glorious Days* there are no more civilians," said the Count bitterly. "But enough of these personal problems," he added, recalling Baron Thérance and ordering the Captain to remain. "Who are the party leaders in Nancy?"

The General replied:

"MM. de Pontlevé and de Vassignies are the titular heads of Carlism, commissioned by Charles X. But a confounded intriguer named Dr. Du Poirier is in fact the real head. Officially he is only the secretary of the Carlist Committee. The Jesuit Rey, the Grand Vicar, rules all the women of Nancy from the greatest lady to the smallest shop-keeper; that's as plain as a pikestaff. Just notice if, at the dinner given in your honor by the Prefect, there is a single guest outside government officials. Ask anyone if a single person connected with the government and who is a frequent guest at the prefecture, is ever received by Mesdames de Chasteller, d'Hocquincourt or de Commercy."

"Who are these ladies?"

"They belong to the richest and proudest nobility. Madame d'Hocquincourt is the prettiest woman of the town and lives extravagantly. Madame de Commercy is a sort of Madame de Staël who is always holding forth in favor of Charles X as the Geneva woman used to do against Napoleon. I was in command of Geneva and that madwoman was a terrible nuisance to us."

"And Madame de Chasteller?" asked the Count with interest.

"Well, she's awfully young, although she's the widow of a major-general attached to the court of Charles X. And she preaches the *gospel* in her drawing room. All the young men of the town are mad about her. . . . The other day when a right-thinking young man had lost heavily at cards, Madame de Chasteller had the temerity to go to his house. Isn't it true, Captain?"

"It certainly is, General; I happened to be in the vicinity of the young man's house at the time. Madame de Chasteller gave him three thousand gold francs and a piece of jewelry covered with diamonds which the Duchesse d'Angoulême had

given her, and which the young man went to pawn in Strasbourg. I have the pawnbroker's letter on me."

"Enough, enough," said the Count as the Captain produced a fat portfolio.

"There are also," continued General Thérance, "the Puy-laurens, the de Serpieres and Madame de Marcilly, where Monsignor the Bishop is received as general-in-chief, and where, devil take me, not one of us ever sets foot. Do you know where the Prefect spends his evenings? In Madame Berchu's parlor—she is the grocer's wife—and the parlor is behind the shop. That is something he doesn't write to the Minister. I have more dignity than that. I go nowhere, so I'm in bed by eight o'clock."

"What do the officers do in the evening?"

"The café and the women of the town, but a bourgeois home—never! We are treated like untouchables. Those devils of bourgeois husbands play the spy for each other with the excuse of *liberalism*. The only happy men here are the artillery and the officers of engineers."

"And what side are they on?"

"They're all infernal republicans—*ideologists* you know! The captain here can tell you that they all subscribe to the *National* and the *Charivari*, all the filthy sheets, and that they openly laugh at my *orders of the day* regarding the press. They have the papers sent to a man in Darney, a little town six leagues from here. And I wouldn't want to swear that they don't have meetings with Gauthier on their hunting parties."

"Who is this man Gauthier?"

"The leader of the republicans, I've already mentioned him, the editor of their incendiary paper called *Aurore*. Last year, he challenged me to a duel, and what makes it really abominable is that he is employed by the government. He is cadastral surveyor, and I can't get him removed. I reported in vain his

last contribution to the *National* for the Marshal Ney fund. . . .”

“Let’s not talk about that,” said the Count, blushing. And he had all the difficulty in the world getting rid of Baron Thérance who found relief in thus unburdening his heart.

## CHAPTER FOUR

WHILE BARON THÉRANCE was painting this sad picture of the city of Nancy, the Twenty-seventh Regiment of Lancers was nearing it across the dreariest plain in the world. Nothing could possibly grow in that barren, stony ground, as Lucien noticed at a certain point about a league outside the city from which only three trees in all were to be seen. One growing at the side of the road was sickly and not twenty feet in height. What seemed in the distance a redoubt, he discovered, on nearer approach, to be a row of barren hills. A few meager grapevines were struggling in the gorges formed by these valleys. For a quarter of a league outside the city two pitiful rows of stunted elms marked the course of the highway. The peasants they passed all looked miserable and wore an expression of astonishment. “So this is *la belle France!*” thought Lucien. A little farther along the regiment passed some of those large and useful but dirty establishments which mournfully proclaim an advanced civilization—a slaughter house, an oil refinery, etc., etc. After these lovely sights came vast gardens entirely planted with cabbages—not the tiniest shrub anywhere.

Finally the road made a turn, and the regiment came face to face with the first row of fortifications which, on the side of the town toward Paris, seemed extremely low, as though

buried in the earth. The regiment came to a halt and was recognized by the guard. But we forgot to mention that, about a league farther back, the clean-up halt had been made. In a few moments all traces of mud had vanished, uniforms and horses' harness were restored to their former splendor.

At about eight-thirty on a dark cold morning, on the 24th of March, 183-, the Twenty-seventh Regiment of Lancers marched into Nancy. It was preceded by a magnificent band which obtained a signal success with the townsfolk and *grisettes* of Nancy. Thirty-two trumpeters dressed in red and mounted on white horses blew until they almost burst. And the six trumpeters who formed the first row were Negroes into the bargain, while the drum-major was fairly seven feet tall.

All the beauties of the city and particularly the young working girls decked out in lace, were hanging out of the windows, and fully appreciated this ear-splitting music enhanced, it is true, by the trumpeters' scarlet uniforms resplendent with gold braid.

This well-fortified town of Nancy, Vauban's masterpiece, appeared abominable to Lucien. Filth and poverty seemed to have got the better of everything else, and the appearance of the inhabitants reflected perfectly the dreariness of the buildings. Lucien saw nothing all around him but miserly faces—mean, sharp and surly expressions. "These people think of nothing but money and how to make money," he thought with disgust. "Without doubt such is the character and aspect of that America which the liberals so loudly extol."

Accustomed to the courteous faces of his home city, the young Parisian was sincerely distressed. The narrow streets, ill-paved and all twists and turns, had nothing remarkable about them except their disgusting dirt. In the middle ran a gutter filled with muddy water that looked like some slatey concoction.

Suddenly the horse of the lancer marching on Lucien's right, shied and the nag that had been assigned to Lucien was splattered with this foul black mixture. Our hero noticed that this little accident was the cause of the greatest joy to all his new comrades near enough to witness it. The sight of these smiles that tried to appear supercilious cut the wings of Lucien's imagination. They put him in a very bad humor.

"Above all," he said to himself, "I must remember that this is not a camp, that there is no enemy a quarter of a league away, and moreover, that none of these gentlemen who are under forty have ever faced the enemy any more than I have. Hence their habits of meanness, offspring of boredom. These are no longer those young officers full of gallantry, heedlessness, and gaiety, one meets at the *Gymnase*. They are unbearably bored, poor devils, and would like nothing better than to amuse themselves at my expense. They'll bear me a grudge until the day I've fought a few duels, and the sooner the better, so I'll be left in peace. But I wonder if that fat lieutenant-colonel could act as my second? I'm afraid not, on account of his rank; he has to set a good example . . . Where am I to find a second?"

Lucien happened to raise his eyes and noticed a large house that was less shabby than the others the regiment had passed. In the middle of a blank wall he remarked a pair of shutters painted a parrot-green. "What a taste for gaudy colors these provincials have!"

Lucien was feeling pleased with this not very complimentary opinion, when he saw the parrot-green shutters open a little way, and caught sight of a young woman with magnificent blond hair and a haughty air, who had apparently come to the window to watch the regiment march by. All Lucien's gloomy thoughts vanished at the sight of this pretty face; his soul was restored. The dirty scaling walls of the houses of Nancy, the black mud, the envious spirit of his comrades, the

inevitable duels, the atrocious paving stones on which his old nag (they had probably given it to him with malice aforethought) kept slipping, all vanished. Because of some stoppage under a covered passage at the end of the street, the regiment had been forced to halt. The young woman closed her window and stood looking out, half hidden by an embroidered muslin curtain. She might have been twenty-four or -five years old. It seemed to Lucien that there was an odd look in her eye; was it irony, was it hate, or simply youth and an inclination to be amused at everything?

The second squadron, to which Lucien belonged, suddenly began to move again. Lucien, his eyes still turned toward the parrot-green shutters, gave his horse a touch of his spurs which startled the old nag; it slipped, fell, and threw Lucien to the ground.

To get up, to give his beast a furious blow with the sheath of his saber was the matter of an instant, but the burst of laughter all around him was general and hilarious. Lucien, back in the saddle, noticed that the lady with the ash-blond hair was still smiling. The officers of the regiment, it was very evident, were laughing *pointedly*, like a member of the *center* in the Chamber of Deputies when one of the ministers has been justly rebuked.

"Never you mind, he's a good little fellow," said an old sergeant with white whiskers.

And one of the lancers added:

"That old screw has never been so well mounted before."

Lucien was very red and affected an air of indifference.

The regiment was hardly settled in barracks and duties assigned, before Lucien rushed to the post stables.

"Sir," he said to the post-master, "I am an officer, as you can see, and I have no horse. This miserable jade which was given me in the regiment, possibly as a joke, has fallen with me—again as you can see." And he blushed as he looked at



the vestiges of mud which, having dried, whitened the left side of his uniform. "In a word, sir, is there a passable horse to be bought in this town? I must have one immediately."

"By gad, sir, what a fine chance to swindle you!" Monsieur Bouchard, the post-master, replied. "But that's a thing I wouldn't do."

He was a big man with an air of importance, an ironic expression, and piercing eyes. He watched the elegant young man as he spoke, trying to decide how many louis above the price of the horse he could charge him.

"You are a cavalry officer, sir, and undoubtedly know horses."

As Lucien failed to reply with any humbug, the post-master decided he might safely add:

"Will you permit me to ask, have you ever been to war?"

Thinking the man might be making fun of him, Lucien's frank expression changed instantly at this question.

"It is not a question of my having been to war or not," he replied sharply, "but whether you, the post-master, have a horse for sale."

Monsieur Bouchard seeing himself thus put in his place had some idea of washing his hands of the young man; but to let slip such an occasion for earning ten louis, especially to deprive himself of an hour's gossip was something utterly beyond the worthy post-master. In his youth he had seen active service, and looked upon officers of Lucien's age as children playing a game.

"For many years, sir," Bouchard continued in an ingratiating tone, ignoring the rebuke, "I was cavalry corporal, and then sergeant in the First Cuirassiers; and in that capacity I was wounded at Montmirail in 1814 in the exercise of my functions. That is why I spoke of war. At any rate, as to the question of horses, mine are only hacks at ten or twelve louis, in no way worthy of an officer so well turned out and spruce as yourself, at best only good enough to go on errands—real hacks in short! But if you know how to handle a horse, which I don't

doubt"—here Bouchard's eye sought the left sleeve of the elegant uniform, white with dried mud, and, in spite of himself, he resumed his bantering tone—"if you can handle a horse, M. Fléron, our young prefect, has just the thing for you: an English demi-thoroughbred sold to him by an English lord living here, a horse well known to connoisseurs, superb hocks, admirable shoulders, worth three thousand francs, which has only thrown M. Fléron four times for the very good reason that the said prefect only dared ride him four times. His last tumble took place when he was reviewing the National Guard, composed for the most part of old troopers, myself for example, sergeant . . ."

"Let us go then," replied Lucien with ill-humor. "I will buy it on the spot."

The decided tone with which Lucien accepted the price of three thousand francs and the firmness with which he had cut short the former non-com, *carried the day*.

"By all means, let's go, Lieutenant," replied Bouchard with all the respect that Lucien could have asked. And he started off immediately on foot, following Lucien who was still mounted on his old nag. To get to the prefecture they had to go to an out-of-the-way part of the city near the powder-magazine, some five minutes from the residential quarter. It was in a former monastery admirably arranged by the last prefects of the Empire. The pavilion in which the prefect was lodged was surrounded by an English garden. Our gentlemen arrived at the iron entrance door. From the mezzanine, where the offices were located, they were directed to another door ornamented with columns, and leading to a magnificent second-floor where M. Fléron had his private apartments. M. Bouchard rang. No one answered the bell for some time. Finally a most elegant valet came to the door with a bustling air, and ushered them into an untidy drawing room. True, it was only one o'clock. With circumspect gravity, the valet repeated the usual

phrases about the extreme difficulty of seeing M. le Préfet, and Lucien was about to lose patience when M. Bouchard intervened with the magic words:

"We have come on a *matter of business* that will interest the Prefect."

This seemed to shock the valet's dignity, but he made no move.

"Eh, by God, it's to sell your Lara for you," said the former sergeant, adding, "the horse that throws M. le Préfet so neatly."

At these words the valet promptly turned on his heel, begging the gentlemen to wait.

After ten minutes, Lucien saw gravely advancing toward him, a young man about four and a half feet tall, who appeared timid and arrogant at the same time. He seemed to bear, with a certain pride, an admirable head of hair so blond as to appear perfectly colorless. Extremely fine and worn too long, it was parted in a meticulously drawn line that separated its owner's head in two equal sections after the German fashion. At the sight of this little figure, which apparently walked on springs, and aimed at grace as well as majesty, Lucien's anger subsided and was followed by a mad desire to laugh. Indeed he had great difficulty to keep from laughing out loud. "His head is a perfect image of a Christ by Lucas Cranach," he thought. "This then is one of those terrible prefects against whom the liberal papers fulminate every morning!"

Lucien was no longer incensed by his long wait. He examined curiously the stuffy little creature coming toward him quite slowly, waddling a little, and assuming the air of someone who is naturally imperturbable, and above the emotions of this mundane sphere. Lucien was so absorbed in his contemplation that a silence ensued.

M. Fléron was flattered by the effect he had produced, and on a military man at that! Finally he asked Lucien how he could be of service to him, but he pronounced the phrase with

much gargling of "r"s and in a tone that called for an insolent rejoinder.

Lucien's difficulty was not to laugh in his face. Unfortunately he just then remembered a certain M. Fléron, a deputy. This creature must be the worthy son or nephew of that M. Fléron who fairly wept with emotion whenever he had occasion to mention *our esteemed ministers*.

This recollection was too much for our hero who was still a novice, and he burst out laughing.

"Sir," he said finally, keeping his eyes fixed on the dressing gown, unique of its kind, which was wrapped around the young Prefect. "I am told that you have a horse to sell. I should like to see it, try it out for half an hour, and pay cash for it."

The worthy Prefect looked as though he were dreaming. He had some difficulty accounting for the young officer's laughter. But the main thing in his eyes was to make it perfectly plain that nothing had the slightest interest for him.

"Sir," he said finally and as though reciting a lesson he had learned by heart, "I very much fear that the urgent and grave affairs with which I am overwhelmed, have made me guilty of an incivility. I have reason to suspect that you have been kept waiting. I am very much to blame."

And he lost himself in amenities. The unctuous phrases took some time in coming. As he failed to reach the end of them, our hero, who was less interested than the Prefect in nursing his reputation for perfect manners, took the liberty of bringing the conversation around to the object of his visit.

"I have all due respect for the occupations of M. le Préfet; I should like to see the horse that is for sale and to try it out in the presence of the groom of M. le Préfet."

"It is an English animal," replied M. Fléron in a tone grown almost affable, "a good demi-thoroughbred with all the guarantees. I bought it of Lord Link who has lived here for many years; the horse is well known to connoisseurs. But," he added,

lowering his eyes, "I must admit that it is now cared for only by a French servant. I shall place Perrin at your service. You can well imagine that I do not confide such an animal to ordinary hands, and none of the other servants are allowed to go near it."

After giving his orders in a carefully polished style, listening to himself as he spoke, the young magistrate drew his gold-embroidered dressing-gown around him, steadied a sort of bonnet perched over his eyes that looked like the light cavalry's roll and threatened to fall off at any moment. All these little adjustments were made slowly and watched attentively by the post-master whose mocking air changed to a sarcastic smile that was altogether impertinent. But this attitude of Bouchard's was entirely lost on the Prefect who was not in the habit of taking the slightest notice of such people. When he was satisfied that his costume was in order, he bowed to Lucien, gave a curt nod in the direction of Bouchard without looking at him, and returned to his apartments.

"And to think that a nincompoop like that is going to review our troops next Sunday!" cried Bouchard. "Wouldn't it make you puke?"

M. Bouchard, in his animosity against young men higher up in the world than a non-com of Montmirail, soon found ample cause for rejoicing. No sooner did the English horse find itself outside the stable from which it was released much too seldom to suit its taste, than it began galloping around the courtyard and indulging in the most fantastic capers. It leapt into the air, all four feet off the ground, head thrown back as though it were trying to climb into the plane trees surrounding the courtyard of the prefecture.

"It's not a bad beast," said Bouchard, going up to Lucien with a perfidious air. "But probably for the last week neither the Prefect nor his valet Perrin has dared take him out, so perhaps it would be rather imprudent. . . ."

Lucien was struck by the suppressed joy that shone in the post-master's little eyes. "It is written," he thought, "that twice in one day I shall be thrown off a horse; such is to be my debut in Nancy." Bouchard, after getting some oats from a manger, caught and held the animal. But Lucien had all the trouble in the world mounting and mastering the spirited Lara.

He went off at a gallop, but soon succeeded in bringing the horse to a walk. Astonished by Lara's beauty and vigorous gait, Lucien felt no compunction in keeping the jeering post-master waiting. Lara did a league or more, and only reappeared in the courtyard of the prefecture a full half hour later. The valet was beside himself with anxiety at the delay. As for the post-master, he was really hoping to see the horse return riderless. When he saw it appear with its rider still on its back, he scrutinized Lucien's uniform closely. There was nothing to indicate a fall. "Well, well, he's not such a ninny as the others," Bouchard said to himself.

Lucien concluded the affair without getting off his horse. "Nancy must never again see me mounted on that old screw." Bouchard, who did not have the same qualms, mounted the regiment's horse, and M. Perrin accompanied the gentlemen to the collector-general's office where Lucien procured the money.

"You see, Monsieur Bouchard, I never let myself be thrown more than once a day," said Lucien as soon as they were alone. "What really distresses me is that my fall took place in front of that window with the parrot-green shutters—over there—as you come into the town, just before reaching the covered passage—a kind of mansion."

"Ah," said Bouchard, "in the Rue de la Pompe? And there was probably a very pretty lady at the smallest of the windows?"

"Yes, and she laughed at my predicament. It is very disagreeable to be introduced into a garrison in such a fashion, espe-

cially such an important garrison. You, who have been a soldier, will understand. What will they think of me in the regiment! But, tell me, who is the lady?"

"She was around twenty-five or -six, wasn't she, with ash-blond hair long enough to touch the ground?"

"And very beautiful eyes, but full of mockery."

"She is Madame de Chasteller, a widow who is courted by all the handsomest men of the nobility because she has millions. Everywhere she goes she preaches the cause of Charles X, and if I were in that little prefect's boots, I'd have her locked up; our province will end up by being a second Vendée. She's a rabid *ultra* who would like to see all of us, who served the fatherland, a hundred feet under ground. She is the daughter of the Marquis de Pontlevé, one of our most zealous *ultras* and," he added, lowering his voice, "he is one of Charles X's commissioners for this province. That's just between you and me. I don't want to be taken for an informer."

"Have no fear."

"They came to sulk here after the *July Days*. They say that what they want is to starve the people of Paris by depriving them of work; but just the same, he's not very smart. Dr. Du Poirier, the best doctor around here, is his right-hand man. Du Poirier is a sly one and bosses both M. de Pontlevé and M. de Puylaurens, Charles's other commissioner; for hereabouts everybody plots quite openly. There's also Abbé Olivier . . . he is a spy."

"But, my dear sir," laughed Lucien, "I have nothing against Abbé Olivier being a spy—there are plenty of others—but do tell me more about the pretty Madame de Chasteller."

"Ah, that pretty little lady who laughed at you when you fell off your horse? She's seen many others fall off their high horses! She is the widow of one of the brigadier generals attached to the person of Charles X, and who was, besides, grand chamberlain and aide-de-camp; in short, a great lord who after

the Three Days came here to die of fright. He was always sure the populace *was rising*, as he assured me a dozen times; but a good sort for all that, not insolent at all; on the contrary, very considerate. Whenever couriers arrived from Paris, he always wanted the best pair of horses reserved for them, and he paid well too, by God! he did. For you must know, sir, that it is only nineteen leagues from here to the Rhine by shortcut. He was a tall pale man, and always in a famous funk."

"And his widow?" asked Lucien, much amused.

"She had her own house in the Faubourg Saint Germain, in the street they call Babylone—what a name! You, sir, must know it. She wouldn't mind a bit going back to Paris; but her father is dead-set against it, and tries to separate her from all her old friends, wants to monopolize her in other words! You see, it's like this: during the reign of the Jesuits and Charles X, M. de Chasteller, who was precious pious, made millions on a loan, and now his widow has all that money, and M. de Pontlevé wants to be able to lay his hands on it in case of revolution.

"Every morning M. de Chasteller used to have his carriage hitched up to go to Mass not a stone's throw away; an English carriage that cost at least ten thousand francs and didn't make a sound on the cobblestones. He always said you owed that much to the people. For such things he was a great stickler, always wore his full dress uniform to High Mass on Sunday, with the *cordón rouge* across his coat, and had four lackeys in livery and yellow gloves. But just the same, he never left his servants a thing when he died, because, as he told the vicar who ministered to him at the end, *they were all Jacobins*. But Madame de Chasteller, being still in the land of the living, was afraid, and pretended it was an oversight in the will. She gives them small pensions or else keeps them in her service, and often for practically nothing at all gives them forty francs. She occupies the entire second floor of the Hôtel de Pontlevé; that's



where you saw her. But her father insists that she pay rent. It costs her four thousand francs, but you may be sure that the Marquis could never have let that floor for more than a hundred louis. He's a frightful miser. Be that as it may, he speaks to everybody, and very politely too. He says there is going to be another Republic, a new emigration, and that they'll cut off the heads of all the nobles and the priests. And M. de Pontlevé was pretty miserable during the first emigration; they say he worked as a bookbinder in Hamburg, and today he flies into a rage if anyone so much as mentions books in front of him. The truth is, in case of need, he counts on his daughter's fortune; that's why he doesn't want to lose sight of it—he said so to one of his friends . . .”

“But, my dear sir, what do I care for all the absurdities of an old man?” said Lucien. “Tell me about Madame de Chasteller.”

“She receives high society in her house every Friday and preaches to them exactly like a preacher, no more no less. Her servants say that she talks like an angel; they all can understand her, and there are days when she makes them cry. Poor fools, I tell them; she's dead-set against the people; if she could put us all in Mont-Saint-Michel she would. But be that as it may, she bewitches them, they love her.

“She blames her father, the valet says, because he refuses to see her younger brother, chief magistrate of the royal court at Metz, for having taken the oath. The Marquis calls that dirtying oneself. No one who is a *juste-milieu* is received in society here. That fop of a prefect who sold you his horse, swallows insults like water. He doesn't dare present himself at Madame de Chasteller's for she'd tell him just what she thought of him to his face. Whenever he goes to call on Madame d'Hocquincourt, one of our most elegant ladies, she stands in plain sight at one of the windows facing the street and has her porter say that

she's not at home. . . . Oh, but excuse me, sir, you are a *Justemilieu* yourself, I forgot."

This last was said with some glee, and there was a touch of the same in Lucien's rejoinder.

"My friend, you give me information, I listen to it as to a report on the position of the enemy. And now, good-by until we meet again. What is the best apartment-hotel in Nancy?"

"*Hotel of the Three Emperors*, 13 Rue des Vieux-Jesuites. But as it isn't easy to find and I am going that way I'll have the honor of taking you there myself." (I've been badgering him enough, Bouchard said to himself, I'd better let up and talk to the young puppy about the ladies.)

"Madame de Chasteller is the most capricious of all the ladies of the nobility," he went on with the feigned nonchalance of a man of the people trying to hide his confusion. "That is to say, Madame d'Hocquincourt is just as pretty; but Madame de Chasteller has had only one lover, M. Thomas de Busant de Sicile, lieutenant-colonel of hussars—he's the one you're substitute for. She's always sad and peculiar except when she talks about Henri V. Her servants say that she will often order her carriage brought around, and then an hour later order it taken away again without going out. She has the most beautiful eyes in the world, as you saw, and eyes that can say anything they like. Madame d'Hocquincourt is much gayer and wittier, she always has something funny to say, and she twists her husband around her finger. He's a former captain, wounded in the July Days and, my faith, a worthy man. To be sure, they're all worthy men around here! At any rate she does what she pleases with him, and changes lovers every year. At present it's M. d'Antin who is ruining himself for her. I'm always furnishing them with horses for pleasure parties in the Burelviller woods—you can see them over there on the other side of the plain. God knows what they do in those woods! They get my postil-

lions so drunk they can't see or hear anything. And the devil if they have a thing to tell me when they get back."

"But where do you see any woods?" asked Lucien, scanning the dreariest landscape in the world.

"A league away from here, the other side of the plain, magnificent shady woods; a beautiful spot. That's where the *Green Huntsman* is. It's run by Germans so they always have music. It's the *Tivoli* of these part. . . ."

A movement of Lucien's horse alarmed the garrulous post-master who thought his victim was going to escape him, and what a victim, a handsome Parisian youth just arrived in town and forced to listen to him!

"Every week," he went on hastily, "that pretty woman with blond hair who laughed a little when she saw you fall off your horse, or rather when your horse fell—there's a difference. . . . But to get back to what I was telling you—every week, or just about, she turns down an offer of marriage. M. de Blancet, her cousin, who is always in attendance; M. de Goëlle, the biggest intriguer, a regular Jesuit, you know; Count Ludwig Roller, the most high-and-mighty of the nobles, all have come a cropper. Ah, she's not so dumb as to marry in the provinces! And so, as I told you, to relieve her boredom, she bravely took the lieutenant-colonel of the Twentieth Hussars, M. Thomas de Busant de Sicile in a left-handed marriage. She had him eating out of her hand, but no matter, he didn't budge, and he is one of the greatest nobles of France, they say. Then there are Madame la Marquise de Puylaurens and Madame de Saint-Vincent who never forget themselves; but then the ladies of our city are loath to stoop to anything beneath their rank. They are very strict on this point and I must tell you, my dear sir, with all due respect, and though I've never been anything but a non-com of cuirassiers (as a matter of fact I did ten campaigns in ten years), I have my doubts if the widow of the brigadier-

general, M. de Chasteller, who has had a lieutenant-colonel for lover, would ever accept the advances of a simple second-lieutenant, no matter how attractive. For," added the post-master, assuming a pathetic air, "merit doesn't count for much here; rank and nobility are everything."

"In that case, it's all up with me," thought Lucien.

"Good-by, sir," he said to Bouchard, putting his horse to a trot. "I'll send a lancer to your stables for the horse, and a very good evening to you."

He had caught sight of the enormous sign of the *Three Emperors* in the distance.

"Well, anyway, that's one I've baited all right, him and his *Juste-milieu*," said Bouchard to himself, chuckling gleefully. "And a forty-franc tip, besides, *to give to my postillions*—just catch me doing it!"

## CHAPTER FIVE

M BOUCHARD had more reason to be pleased than he knew. When the departure of that individual with the piercing eyes left him to his own thoughts, Lucien found himself in a very bad humor. As an introduction to a provincial city and in a cavalry regiment, the fall from his horse was the worst possible disaster. "It will never be forgotten. Every time I'm seen on the street, even if I ride like the oldest lancer of the regiment, people will say, 'Ah, there goes the young man who fell off his horse the day the regiment arrived.'"

Our hero was suffering the consequences of that Parisian education which develops nothing but vanity, the melancholy

portion of the sons of rich men. All this vanity was up in arms, ready for his initiation in the regiment. Lucien had fully expected a duel or two, and had decided that the important thing was to take it all lightly and with firmness; to show oneself bold under arms, etc., etc. But instead, ridicule and humiliation had fallen on him out of the window of the most aristocratic young woman of the place, and a rabid and garrulous *ultra* besides, who would know how to make him the laughing-stock of Nancy. What wouldn't she say about him!

That smile which Lucien had seen straying over her lips when he had sprung up covered with mud and given his horse a furious blow with the scabbard of his saber—he couldn't get it out of his mind. "How stupid of me to have given that blow with my scabbard and with such a show of anger. That was what made me ridiculous! Anyone can fall off his horse, but to hit it angrily, to show how humiliated one is by the fall . . . ! I should have remained impassive; I should have done the opposite of what people expected, as my father says. . . . If ever I meet this Madame de Chasteller, she'll be sure to burst out laughing when she recognizes me! And what are they going to say in the regiment? Ah, as for you, my witty gentlemen, I warn you to lower your voices when you indulge in your bad jokes."

Upset by these unpleasant thoughts, Lucien, who found his man already in the finest apartment of the *Three Emperors*, spent two long hours making his military toilet. "Everything depends on first impressions, and I have much to retrieve."

"My uniform is really excellent," he thought, looking at himself in the two mirrors which he had placed in such a way as to see himself from head to foot. "But those mocking eyes of Madame de Chasteller, those eyes sparkling with mirth and malice, will always see mud on this sleeve," and he looked pathetically at his traveling uniform thrown over the back of a

chair. In spite of all the brushing it still kept all too evident traces of his accident.

After an interminable time spent getting dressed, much to the amusement (unsuspected by Lucien) of the hotel personnel and the landlady, who had loaned him her own cheval-glass, Lucien went down to the courtyard where he examined, with no less critical eye, the grooming of his horse. He found Lara presentable except for her back shoes, which he had polished over again in his presence. Finally he vaulted into his saddle, not, however, with military precision and gravity, but with the lightness of an acrobat for he was much too eager to show the hotel domestics gathered in the courtyard that he was perfectly at home on a horse. He asked to be directed to the Rue de la Pompe and started off at a fast trot. "Happily Madame de Chasteller, the widow of a cavalry officer, must be a good judge."

But the parrot-green shutters were hermetically closed, and Lucien rode back and forth in front of the house in vain. Then he went to see Lieutenant-Colonel Filloteau to thank him, and to learn from him all the little social duties that should occupy the first day of a second-lieutenant who has just joined his regiment.

He paid two or three calls of ten minutes each, and displayed that coolness (a *well-chain* is no colder) so especially desirable in a young man of twenty-four, and this proof of a perfect education met with the desired success.

As soon as he was free, he went to visit the scene of his morning disaster again. He arrived in front of the Hôtel de Pontlevé at a fast trot, and there, on the exact spot, he made his horse break into a smooth little gallop that was altogether charming. A few light touches on the bridle, unnoticeable to the profane, gave to the prefect's horse, astonished by the audacity of his rider, those little movements of petulance so de-

lightful to connoisseurs. But, in vain, Lucien held himself straight and motionless in his saddle, even a little stiff—the parrot-green shutters remained closed.

He recognized, in a military sense, the window where he had been laughed at. It had a Gothic frame and was smaller than the others. It was on the second floor of a large house, apparently very ancient, but freshly whitewashed in keeping with the taste of that part of the country. Fine large windows had been cut out on that floor but those of the floor above were the ancient ones with little mullioned panes. This semi-Gothic house had a magnificent modern iron entrance-gate on the Rue du Reposoir which crossed the Rue de la Pompe at right angles. Over the door, in gold letters on a dark marble slab, Lucien read: *Hôtel de Pontlevé*.

It seemed a dreary neighborhood, yet the Rue du Reposoir seemed to be one of the best streets of the city—and one of the loneliest; grass was growing everywhere.

“How I should despise this melancholy house,” thought Lucien, “if it were not that it harbored a young woman who laughed at me—and with good reason!

“But the devil take this provincial beauty! Where, I wonder, is the promenade in this idiotic city? Let’s find it.” In less than three quarters of an hour, thanks to the swiftness of his horse, Lucien had made the tour of Nancy, a wretched hole bristling with fortifications. He looked in vain. All he found in the way of a promenade was a long square crossed at both ends by nauseous ditches that carried off the city’s filth, and vegetating all around it, a thousand stunted fan-shaped linden trees pruned with great care.

“Could anyone imagine anything in the world more unpleasant than this town!” our hero kept repeating at each new discovery. And his heart sank.

There was ingratitude in this feeling of profound disgust.

For, during his tours and detours around the ramparts and through the streets, he had been observed by Madame d'Hocquincourt, by Madame de Puylaurens and even by Mademoiselle Berchu, queen of the bourgeois beauties of Nancy. The latter had even remarked: "What a handsome cavalier!"

Ordinarily Lucien could very well have ridden incognito through Nancy. But today all society, high, low and medium, was in a flutter. For in the provinces, the arrival of a regiment is no small event. Paris lives in ignorance of this emotion, and of a great many others too. With the arrival of a regiment the merchant dreams of making the fortune of his establishment, and respectable mothers with marriageable daughters, of marrying off at least one of them. It is entirely a question of pleasing the customers. The nobility ask: "Are there any *names* in this regiment?" The priests, "Have all the soldiers had their first communion?" A first communion of *one hundred subjects* would certainly make a good impression on Monsignor! The world of the grisettes is stirred by emotions, less profound perhaps than those of the ministers of our Lord, but livelier without a doubt.

During Lucien's first peregrination in search of a promenade, the daring (somewhat affected) with which he handled the prefect's notoriously dangerous horse (daring that indicated plainly that he had bought it), had built up his credit with a great many people. "Who," they asked, "is this second-lieutenant who, on his first day in town, treats himself to a horse worth a thousand crowns?"

Among those who were most struck by the probable opulence of the newcomer we should, in all fairness, first mention Mademoiselle Sylviane Berchu.

"Mama, Mama," she shouted on seeing the prefect's horse, famous throughout the city, "look, it's the prefect's Lara! But he has a rider now who certainly isn't scared!"



"He must be a very rich young man," Madame Berchu remarked. And this thought soon absorbed mother and daughter alike.

This same day, it happened that all the nobility of Nancy was dining at M. d'Hocquincourt's, the very rich young man who has already had the honor of being presented to the reader. They were celebrating the birthday of one of the exiled princesses. Besides a dozen noble imbeciles in love with the past and afraid of the future, it is only fair to mention seven or eight former officers, mettlesome young men who, above all else, longed for war and who refused to submit to the fortunes of revolution. Having resigned their commissions after the *July Days*, they did nothing, and thought themselves miserable by right of rank. They chafed under their forced idleness, which by no means amused them; and this boring life did not tend to make them over-indulgent toward the young officers of the present army. Their ill humor marred minds of natural distinction, and betrayed itself in an exaggerated disdain.

In the course of his reconnoitering, Lucien passed three times in front of the Hôtel de Sauve-d'Hocquincourt, the garden of which intercepts the promenade around the ramparts. The company had just risen from table, and Lucien was scrutinized by all that was *purest* in Nancy, both by birth and right-thinking. The best judges of horsemanship—M. de Vassigny, a lieutenant-colonel, the three Roller brothers, M. de Blancet and M. d'Antin, both captains of cavalry, MM. de Goëlle, Murcé, and de Lanfort—all had their word to say. These poor young men had been less bored that day than usual. In the morning the arrival of a regiment had given them an excuse for talking war and horses, the only two things besides watercolor painting that a fine gentleman in the provinces is permitted to know anything about. In the evening they had the rare pleasure of

seeing at close range, and of being able to criticize, an officer in the new army.

"That poor horse must be amazed to find itself so boldly handled," said M. d'Antin, Madame d'Hocquincourt's lover.

"The young man is no old hand with a horse, although he rides very well," remarked M. de Vassigny, who was a very handsome man of forty with large features, and who always seemed to be dying of boredom even when he was being witty.

"He is most likely one of those upholsterers or candlemakers called *July heroes*," sneered M. de Goëlle, a tall blond young man, very stiff and supercilious, and already covered with wrinkles of envy.

"How antiquated you are, my poor Goëlle!" cried Madame de Puylaurens, the wittiest woman of Nancy. "Those poor *July Days* have been out of fashion for ages. He is probably the son of one of those corrupt and corpulent deputies."

"One of those eloquent individuals who sit directly behind the minister's back and cry *Sh*, or burst out laughing over an amendment on provisions for convicts at a signal from the minister's *back*." With this fine phrase uttered slowly, the elegant M. de Lanfort developed and illustrated the idea of his witty mistress.

"He must have rented the prefect's horse for a fortnight with the high pay his papa receives from the *Chateau*," said M. de Sanréal.

"Come now, you ought to know people a little better before talking about them like that," M. de Vassigny protested.

"The ant is not a lender,

That's the least of all his faults,"

declaimed the somber Ludwig Roller in tragic tones.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," broke in Madame de Puylaurens. "do make up your minds! Where did this young candle-manu-

facturer get the money to pay for the horse? For, in spite of all your prejudices, you will hardly go so far as to claim that he is not actually on a horse."

"Money, money," cried M. d'Antin, "nothing could be simpler. Papa, in the assembly, or in the budget committees, supported the *Gisquet musket* contracts, or some such war deal." \*

"Live and let live," said M. de Vassigny with an air of political profundity. "That's what our poor Bourbons never understood! They should have *gorged* all the young plebeians, so brazen and garrulous,—today that is called *having talent*. Who can doubt that MM. N——, N——, and N—— would have sold themselves to Charles X, as they sell themselves to the present king? And cheaper besides, for they would have been treated with less contempt. Polite society would have accepted them and received them in their drawing rooms, and that is always the great object of the bourgeois, once his dinner is assured."

"God save us! but here we are head-over-heels in high politics," cried Madame de Puylaurens.

"Well," put in Madame d'Hocquincourt, "July hero, upholsterer, son of a paunchy senator, anything you please, but at any rate he can sit a horse gracefully. And, since his father has sold himself, he, at least, will avoid talking politics and be better company than M. de Vassigny here, who depresses all his friends with his eternal regrets and forebodings. Moaning and groaning should be prohibited—at least after dinner."

"Agreeable company, candle-manufacturer, upholsterer, anything you please," chimed in the tall and puritanical Ludwig Roller whose black hair framed a pale and somber countenance, "but I'll bet you what you like—and I have had my eye on the pretty young gentleman for the last five minutes—that he has not been in the service long."

\* An *ultra* is speaking; who else would call in question the probity that reigns over the making of contracts?

"In that case he's neither a *July hero* nor a manufacturer of candles," retorted Madame d'Hocquincourt with vivacity, "for it is three years since the *Glorious Days* and he has had plenty of time to acquire poise. He must be the son of a paunchy deputy like M. de Villèle's *Three Hundred*, and it is even possible that he has learned to read and write, and knows how to enter a drawing room like anybody else."

"He does not look common," said Madame de Commercy.

"But his seat on a horse is not as perfect, Madam, as you are pleased to imagine," protested Ludwig Roller, with annoyance. "He is stiff and affected. Just let his horse take a sudden side step and he'll be on the ground."

"Which would be the second time today," cried M. de Sanréal with the triumphant air of a fool who is not accustomed to being listened to and at last has some sensational news to disclose. This M. de Sanréal was the richest and the dullest gentleman of these parts. He now had the satisfaction, a rare one for him, of seeing all eyes turned toward him, and he relished the sensation for some time before he could bring himself to tell the story of Lucien's fall. Trying to be witty, he got so tangled up in the lovely tale that it had to be dragged out of him with questions, and he had the pleasure of beginning his recital all over again. All the time he tried his best to make our hero more ridiculous than he had been in reality.

"You can all say what you like," cried Madame de Sauved'Hocquincourt as Lucien passed by her windows for the third time, "but he is a most charming man. And if my husband weren't such a tyrant, I should be tempted to invite him in for coffee, if only to annoy you."

M. d'Hocquincourt took her seriously, and his gentle and pious face paled with terror.

"Oh, but my dear, a stranger! A man of low extraction, perhaps even a working-man!" he said, looking at his fair better half pleadingly.

"Very well then, I will give him up for you," she rejoined with mock seriousness. Whereupon M. d'Hocquincourt squeezed her hand tenderly.

"And you, wise and *weighty* man," she said, turning to the corpulent Sanréal, "where did you pick up this slander about the poor young man—such a slim, handsome young man!—falling off his horse?"

"From no less a person," replied Sanréal, vexed at her teasing allusion to his own bulk, "than Dr. Du Poirier who was at Madame de Chasteller's at the very moment that this imaginary hero of yours was measuring a fool's length along the ground."

"Whether he's a hero or not, this young officer has already aroused plenty of envy and that's a good beginning. In any case, I should much rather be the one who is envied than the envious. Is it his fault that he isn't the model of Bacchus returning from the Indies, or one of his companions? Wait twenty years and then he will be able to hold his own with anybody. Until then I refuse to listen to you any more," and Madame d'Hocquincourt left them to go and open a window at the other end of the drawing room.

The noise of the opening window made Lucien turn his head, and his horse, becoming a little frolicsome, horse and rider were held for a moment or two before the eyes of that amiable company. As he had just passed the window when it opened, Lucien's horse seemed to be backing-up quickly, as though in spite of his rider.

"That isn't the young woman of this morning," said Lucien to himself, a little disappointed. And he forced his horse, highly excited now, to proceed at the slowest possible pace.

"The puppy!" exclaimed Ludwig Roller, angrily leaving the window. "He is probably one of the riding-masters of Franconi's troupe, whom *July* turned into a hero."

"But that can't be the uniform of the Twenty-seventh he's wearing?" said Sanréal with an authoritative air. "Surely the Twenty-seventh has a different colored piping."

At this interesting and learned remark, everyone began talking at once, and the discussion on the subject of the piping lasted a good half hour. Each one of the gentlemen present was anxious to show off his knowledge of this side of military science which extraordinarily resembles the tailor's art, and which was formerly the delight of a great king, our contemporary.

From piping they went on to the monarchical principle, and the women were beginning to get bored when M. de Sanréal, who had left them and had been gone some time, returned breathless.

"I have news!" he cried from the doorway, hardly able to speak. Instantly the monarchical principle found itself miserably abandoned. But Sanréal suddenly became silent. He had seen curiosity in Madame d'Hocquincourt's eyes, and it was only by pulling the words out one by one, as it were, that they learned his story. The prefect's groom had been Sanréal's servant at one time, and zeal for historic truth had taken this noble marquis to the stables of the prefecture. There, from his former servant, he had learned all the circumstances of the sale. But he had also learned unexpectedly from this same source that the price of oats was apparently going to rise. For the deputy head clerk of the prefecture had given the order for the immediate delivery of the prefect's supply; and the clerk, a rich landowner himself, had declared that he would not sell his own oats. Thereupon the noble marquis' preoccupation had suddenly shifted. He congratulated himself on having gone to the prefecture, but was somewhat in the predicament of an actor who, while playing a part on the stage, hears that his house is on fire. Sanréal had oats to sell, and in the provinces

even more than anywhere else, the least question of money eclipses instantly any other interest. The spiciest subject of conversation is forgotten; no one any longer has ears for the most scandalous piece of gossip. Returning to the d'Hocquincourts', Sanréal was profoundly occupied with the importance of not letting a single word escape him on the subject of oats. There were several rich proprietors there who could well *take advantage of it* and sell before him.

While Lucien was enjoying the honor of accumulating all the envies of the noble society of Nancy which had learned that he had purchased a horse for a hundred and twenty louis, revolted by the ugliness of the city, he was making his way sadly to the stables of the prefecture to leave his horse, since M. Fléron had graciously put them at his disposal for a few days.

The following day the Twenty-seventh Lancers assembled, and Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin formally received Lucien into the regiment as second-lieutenant. After the ceremony Lucien was on inspection duty at the barracks. He had hardly got back to his rooms when the thirty-six trumpeters came under his windows to give him an agreeable aubade. He managed to get through all these more necessary than amusing ceremonies very well.

His manner was cold as a *well-chain*, but not quite cold enough. Several times there was a touch of irony on his lips which did not pass unnoticed. For example, Colonel Malher, when he gave Lucien the accolade in front of the regiment, handled his horse so badly that, at the moment of the embrace, it veered away from Lucien's horse. But Lara, obeying admirably a slight touch of the bridle aided by Lucien's knees, smoothly followed the restive movement of the colonel's mount.

As a corps commander is observed with a more jealous eye than a dandy just arrived from Paris with a second lieutenancy,

this maneuver was not lost on the lancers and was a feather in our hero's cap.

"And they say those English horses have no mouth!" said Sergeant La Rose, the same who had come to Lucien's defense after his fall the day before. "They have no mouth for those who can't find it. That whipper-snapper at least knows how to conduct himself. You can see," he added with a swagger, "he's qualified to enter our regiment."

This note of respect for the Twenty-seventh Lancers was generally appreciated by the sergeant's neighbors.

But in maneuvering to follow the colonel's horse, Lucien's expression had unconsciously betrayed his amusement. "Confound the damned republican, he'll pay for that!" the colonel said to himself, and Lucien acquired an enemy in a position to do him a great deal of harm.

When Lucien was at last able to escape from the compliments of the officers on duty at the barracks, from the thirty-six trumpeters, etc., etc., he felt horribly depressed. One thought only was uppermost in his mind: "How empty it all is! They talk of war, the enemy, heroism, honor, when there has been no sign of an enemy for the last twenty years. And my father insists that the miserly Chambers could never be persuaded to vote war credits for more than a single campaign. What use are we soldiers anyway? To make a great show of zeal like a venal deputy!"

As he made this reflection, Lucien, feeling completely disgusted, lay down on an ancient provincial sofa; promptly one of the arms gave way under his weight. He rose in a fury and finished the demolition of this dilapidated relic.

But should he not, on the contrary, have been mad with joy as, in his place, a provincial youth whose education had not cost a hundred thousand francs, certainly would have been? Is there then such a thing as a *false* culture? Is it pos-



sible that our civilization has not yet reached perfection? And we spend our days being witty over the endless inconveniences that accompany such perfection!

## CHAPTER SIX

NEXT MORNING Lucien took an apartment on the Grande Place, in the house of M. Bonard, the grain merchant, and that evening he learned from M. Bonard, who had it from the butler who supplied the brandy for our second-lieutenant's table, that Colonel Filloteau had declared himself Lucien's patron, and had defended him against certain not very benevolent insinuations of Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin.

Lucien's soul was bitter. Everything had contributed to this state: the ugliness of the city, the sight of the dirty cafés filled with officers wearing the same uniform as himself; and among all those faces not one that showed, I will not say the milk of human kindness, but merely that urbanity which is to be found everywhere in Paris. He went to see Filloteau, but the lieutenant-colonel was no longer the same man with whom he had made the trip from Paris. Filloteau had defended him, and to make Lucien appreciate the fact, he took on a self-important and vulgarly protective tone. This put the crowning touch to our hero's ill humor.

"So that's what one has to go through in order to make ninety-nine francs a month," he thought. "What must the men who make millions have to put up with! Confound it!" he went on in a rage, "to think of being patronized, and by such a man, a man I wouldn't have as a lackey!" Misfortune always exaggerates. Hard, bitter and vexed as Lucien was at

the moment, if his host had been an *orthodox* Parisian, he and Lucien would not have exchanged ten words in a year. The portly M. Bonard was merely inordinately interested in questions of money, besides being communicative, obliging and *ingratiating*, as long as there was no chance of making four sous on a measure of wheat. He now came to bring his lodger a few little things for his apartment, and at the end of two hours it was evident that they took pleasure in each other's conversation.

M. Bonard advised Lucien to go to Madame Berchu for his supply of liquor. If it had not been for the worthy grain merchant, it would never have occurred to Lucien that a second-lieutenant, who is supposed to be rich, and who is making his debut in the regiment, should be famous for his liqueurs and brandies.

"It's Madame Berchu, you know, who has such a pretty daughter, Mademoiselle Sylviane. Colonel de Busant always dealt with her. It's that fine shop over there by the cafés. And try, while you're striking a bargain, to find some excuse for speaking to Mademoiselle Sylviane. She is our bourgeois beauty," he added in a serious tone that went ill with his rotund countenance. "Except for her virtue, which is still intact, she can vie with my ladies d'Hocquincourt, de Chasteller, and de Puylaurens."

The worthy M. Bonard was the uncle of M. Gauthier, the leader of the republicans of that region, otherwise he would not have indulged in these disparaging remarks. But the young editors of *Aurore*, Lorraine's *American* newspaper, often came to his house to chat over a bowl of punch, and to persuade him that he ought to be offended by certain actions of the noble landowners who sold him their wheat. Although calling themselves, and believing themselves to be, republicans, these young men were really miserable at being inexorably barred from the society of these aristocratic young women whose beauty and

charms they could only everlastingly admire from a distance, either on the promenade or at church. They took their revenge by believing all the malicious gossip on the subject of the ladies' virtue. Such calumnies invariably came from the ladies' own lackeys, for in the provinces there is no longer the slightest communication between the hostile classes.

But to return to our hero. Thus prompted by M. Bonard, he picked up his saber and bearskin, and went across the way to see Madame Berchu. He bought a keg of kirschwasser, then a keg of cognac, then a keg of rum that bore the date 1810, and all this with an offhand little air of indifference intended to impress Mademoiselle Sylviane. And these graces, worthy of a colonel of the *Gymnase*, were not without effect he was soon to discover. The virtuous Sylviane Berchu finally made her appearance. She had been spying through a trap-door cut in the floor of the room over the shop, and had seen that this customer who was turning the shop upside down, was none other than the young officer who had appeared the day before mounted on the prefect's famous Lara. This queen of bourgeois beauties condescended to listen to the few courteous remarks Lucien addressed to her. "It is true she is beautiful," he thought, "but not for me. She is a statue of Juno copied from the antique by a modern artist. Subtleties and simplicity are lacking, massive forms and a German freshness, big hands, big feet, extremely regular features, and endless simpering. But all this ill conceals a too visible arrogance. And these people have the temerity to be outraged by the arrogance of good society!" Lucien noticed especially that toss of the head so full of vulgar haughtiness, evidently intended to call to mind her dowry of twenty thousand crowns. However, thinking of the boredom awaiting him at home, Lucien prolonged his visit in the shop. Mademoiselle Sylviane, aware of her triumph, thought fit to bring out for his approbation some quite well-turned platitudes on officers in general, and on the dangers lurking in their civilities. Lu-

Lucien replied that the dangers were entirely reciprocal, and that he was running a great risk at that very moment. "The young lady must have learned all this by heart," he thought, "for, commonplace as they are, they are certainly not a sample of her ordinary conversation." Such was the admiration that Mademoiselle Sylviane, the belle of Nancy, inspired in Lucien, and, having left her house, the little city seemed to him more forlorn than ever. Thoughtfully he followed his three kegs of *sprits*, as Mademoiselle Sylviane called them. "Now all I have to do is to find some pretext for sending one or two kegs to Lieutenant-Colonel Filloteau."

For this young man, on the threshold of the most brilliant career in the world, as well as the gayest, the evening was deplorable. His servant Aubry, who had been in the family for many years, sought to play the mentor and to give him advice. Lucien promptly sent him packing to Paris with a box of candied fruits for his mother.

This done, he went out. The sky was overcast and there was a cold and piercing little wind blowing from the north. Our second-lieutenant was wearing his dress uniform which, since he was on inspection duty at the barracks, was obligatory; and, moreover, he had learned, among so many other things, that a civilian overcoat was not to be thought of without a special permission from the colonel. He had nothing to do but wander through the dirty streets of this little fortified town, hearing at every two steps the insolent shout, "*Who goes there?*" He smoked countless cigars. After enduring these pleasures for two hours, he looked around for a bookseller's, but found none. He noticed a few books in just one shop, which he hastened to enter. They were *The Christian's Day* on sale at a cheese-monger's near one of the city gates.

He passed in front of several cafés. The windowpanes were foggy with the vapor of many breaths and he could not bring himself to enter any of them; he thought of their unspeakable

odor. From these cafés came the sound of laughter, and, for the first time in his life, he experienced the sensation of envy.

That evening he pondered deeply on the different forms of government, and what were the greatest advantages in life. "If there was only a show in this God-forsaken town I'd try courting one of the young ladies of the chorus. I might find her amiability a little less ponderous than that of Mademoiselle Sylviane, and at least she wouldn't want to marry me."

Never had the future looked so black to him. What prevented him from imagining any brighter prospect was the following course of reasoning which seemed to him irrefutable: "I am going to spend at least one or two years like this, and plan as I may, what I am doing at this moment I shall go right on doing forever."

On one of the days that followed, coming from field drill, Lieutenant-Colonel Filloteau passed by our hero's lodgings. At the door he saw Nicolas Flanet, the lancer whom he had assigned to Lucien to look after his horse. (What, an English horse groomed by a soldier! Ah, but Lucien himself went to the stables at least twice a day.)

"Well, Nicolas, and what do you think of the lieutenant?"

"A good sort, Colonel, very generous but not very gay."

Filloteau went upstairs.

"I have come to pass inspection, my dear comrade-in-arms; for I am going to be an uncle to you, as we used to say in Berchiny, when I was corporal of cavalry there, before Egypt, by God! for I was not a sergeant until Aboukir under Murat, and second-lieutenant two weeks later."

But all these heroic details were lost on Lucien who, at the word *uncle*, had given a start. Quickly he recovered himself.

"Well, my dear uncle," he cried gaily, "I'm much too honored by the title, I assure you. I have here three respectable relatives visiting me, whom I should like to have the honor

of presenting to you. You see there three kegs: the first is Widow Kirschwasser from the Black Forest . . ."

"I reserve her for myself," cried Filloteau with his coarse laugh. And going over to the keg that had been opened, he took up a small jug.

"It wasn't difficult to find a pretext," Lucien thought to himself.

"Ah, but, Colonel, that respectable relative has vowed never to be separated from her sister who is called Mademoiselle Cognac, 1810."

"Gad, you have wit, my boy! You're a good fellow, really," cried Filloteau, "and I owe a vote of thanks to our friend Dévelroy for having brought us together."

It was not exactly avarice on the part of our worthy colonel; but it simply would never have occurred to him to lay out so much money on two kegs of liquor, and he was delighted to have them fall from the skies. Tasting alternately the kirsch and the brandy, he compared them with great deliberation, and his heart melted.

"But let us get down to business; that is what I came about," he said, adopting an air of mystery, as he sank down heavily on the sofa. "You have been throwing your money around; three horses bought in three days. I don't criticize you for that, it is perfectly all right as far as I am concerned. But what are your comrades going to say who have only one horse, or rather who have only three legs?" And he laughed uproariously. "Well, I'll tell you what they'll say. They will call you a republican." And he added slyly, "That's where the shoe pinches *us*. Now, shall I tell you the answer? A fine portrait of Louis-Philippe on horseback, in a rich gold frame, in the place of honor over your commode; and after that, all pleasure and honor to you!" Then with some difficulty he rose from the sofa. "A word to the wise is sufficient, and you don't look so stupid. Honor!" This was the colonel's form of salutation.

"Nicolas, Nicolas!" he shouted out of the window, "go and get me one of those good-for-nothing civilians hanging around the street to carry these two kegs of liquor, and you be sure to escort them yourself, and damn it all, don't come to me with any story about one of the kegs springing a leak in the street; nothing like that, my boy! But come to think of it," Filloteau said, turning to Lucien, "this is manna from heaven, and a broken jug is always a broken jug; so I'll just follow along a few paces behind without seeming to pay any attention. Farewell, my dear comrade." And pointing with his gloved hand to the place over the chest:

"It's understood, a fine Louis-Philippe up there!"

Lucien thought he had got rid of his visitor but Filloteau reappeared in the doorway.

"And by the way, none of those f—ing books in your trunks, no bad newspapers, no pamphlets. None of the *pernicious press* as Marquin says." With these words Filloteau advanced two steps into the room and lowered his voice: "You know that great pock-marked lieutenant, Marquin, they've sent to us from Paris," and he half covered his mouth with his hand: "He even scares the colonel out of his wits! Enough, enough. Some people I know have ears that aren't just made for ornaments! Right?"

"He's a good sort after all," thought Lucien. "He's like Mademoiselle Sylviane Berchu. I might find them to my taste if they didn't make me sick to my stomach. My keg of kirsch proved successful." And he went out to buy the biggest portrait of Louis-Philippe he could find.

A quarter of an hour later Lucien returned followed by a workman carrying an enormous portrait which he had found all framed and ready, having been prepared for a police commissioner recently appointed through the influence of M. Fléron. Thoughtfully Lucien watched the hammering of the nail and the hanging of the portrait.

"My father has often said to me, and now I understand the wisdom of it: '*No one would ever think you were born a gamin of Paris* among quick-witted people who never fail to see the advantage of a civility. But you imagine men and their affairs more important than they are, and you make heroes of everybody you talk to, good or bad. *You spread your nets too high*, as Thucydides said of the Boeotians.'" And Lucien recited the Greek words, which I do not know.

"'People in Paris,' my father says, 'if they hear of some profitable meanness or treachery cry: Bravo, that's a stroke worthy of a Talleyrand! and admire it.' I have been racking my brain to think of some delicate and subtle means of ridding myself of my republican varnish and the fatal label: *A student expelled from the École Polytechnique*. Fifty francs for a frame and fifty for a lithograph does the trick; it's just the thing for these people here; Filloteau knows more about it than I do, and that just goes to show the real superiority of a man of genius over an ordinary mortal; instead of a flock of little steps, one decisive action, simple and striking—the answer in a nutshell. I am very much afraid," he added, "that it will be a long time before I am a lieutenant-colonel."

Happily for Lucien, who was beginning to think himself inferior in every way, the trumpet sounded at the corner of the street, and he had to hurry to the barracks where the fear of the sharp reprimands of his superior officers made him very attentive.

That evening M. Bonard's servant handed him two letters. One of them was written on common schoolboy paper and carelessly sealed. Lucien opened it and read:

Nancy, Department of Meurthe  
March 8, 183-

Lieutenant Whippersnapper:

Our brave lancers who have fought in dozens of battles, are not the sort to be commanded by a little fop from Paris. You may look



for trouble. You will find Martin-Big-Stick everywhere. Pack your trunks double quick, and get out. We advise you for your own sake. Tremble! [*There followed these signatures written with flourishes:*]

Chaseanass, Hardblade, Outugo.

Lucien was as red as a beet and trembling with rage. He, nevertheless, opened the second letter. "It must be written by a woman," he thought. It was on very good paper and seemed to have been written with care.

Sir:

Pity honest men who blush at the means they are forced to resort to in order to communicate their thoughts. It is not for a generous heart that our names must be kept secret, but the regiment swarms with spies and informers. To think of the noble profession of arms reduced to a school of espionage! How true it is that a great betrayal necessarily carries in its wake a thousand lesser evils! We invite you, sir, to verify, by your own observation, the following facts: Five lieutenants or second-lieutenants, MM. D—, R—, Bl—, V—, and Bi—, very elegant and apparently belonging to the higher classes of society, which makes us fear their attraction for you, are spies trying to track down republican opinion. From the bottom of our hearts we profess those opinions; one day we shall give our life blood for them, and we dare believe that you, at the proper time and place, are ready to make the same sacrifice. When the great day of awakening arrives, sir, count on the undersigned, your friends, who are your equals only through their sentiments of tender pity for our unhappy France.

Martius, Publius Julius, Marcus,  
Vindex who will kill Marquin.  
In the name of all these gentlemen.

This letter almost wholly wiped out the feeling of *ignominy* and ugliness so painfully awakened by the first. "The letter of insults written on cheap paper," said Lucien to himself, "is

the anonymous letter of 1780 when the soldiers were scamps and unemployed lackeys, recruited along the Paris quais. This one is the anonymous letter of 183-.

"Publius! Vindex! my poor friends, you would be right if there were a hundred thousand of you. But you are perhaps not more than two thousand scattered throughout France, and the Filloteaux, the Malhers, even the Dévelroys would, if you declared yourselves, have you legally shot, and they would be approved by the immense majority."

All Lucien's sensations had been so dreary since he came to Nancy, that, for want of anything better to do, he let this republican epistle absorb his attention. "The best thing would be for them all to set sail for America. . . . And would I sail with them?" At this question Lucien began pacing the floor with a troubled air.

"No," he said finally. "Why should I fool myself? I am not quite such an imbecile! I do not possess enough fierce virtues to make me think like *Vindex*. I should be bored in America among men who are, it is true, perfectly just and reasonable, but coarse, and who think of nothing but *dollars*. They would talk to me about their ten cows that in the spring would give them ten calves, while I prefer talking about the eloquence of M. de Lamennais, or the talent of Malibran as compared with that of Madame Pasta. I cannot live with men incapable of clever ideas, no matter how virtuous they may be. I should prefer, a hundred times over, the elegant manners of a corrupt court. Washington would have bored me to death, and I prefer to find myself in the same drawing room with M. de Talleyrand. Therefore, the feeling of esteem is not enough for me. I need the pleasures of a time-honored civilization. . . .

"Well then, donkey, why don't you support the corrupt governments which are the products of civilization? Only a fool or a child is content to harbor two conflicting desires at

the same time. I loathe the tedious common sense of an American. The stories of young General Bonaparte, at the time he carried the bridge of Arcole, enrapture me; it is Homer, Tasso, and a hundred times better still! American morality seems to me abominably vulgar, and reading the works of their distinguished men gives me just one desire: never to meet any of them in a salon. That model country seems to me the triumph of stupid and selfish mediocrity, and yet everyone has to court it on pain of death. If I were a peasant with a capital of four hundred louis and five children, I should undoubtedly go to America, buy and cultivate two hundred acres of land in the vicinity of Cincinnati. But what have I in common with that peasant? Have I ever, up until now, been able to earn the price of a cigar?

"Those brave non-commissioned officers would not, in all likelihood, be enraptured by the acting of Madame Pasta; they would not appreciate the conversation of M. de Talleyrand, and what they long for, above all else, is a captain's commission; that is their ideal of happiness. If it were only a question of serving the fatherland, they merit the rank a hundred times more, perhaps, than those who hold it and who, many of them, have got their commissions in the same way I have. They think, and with good reason, that the Republic will make them captains, and feel themselves capable of justifying such a promotion by their deeds of heroism. And what about me? Would I like to be a captain? As a matter of fact, I would not. I really don't know what I want. All I know is that the everyday pleasures of life are to be found only in salons like my mother's.

"Therefore, I am not a republican, but I loathe the meanness of a Malher or a Marquin. What am I then? Not much, I should say. Dévelroy may tell me all he likes: 'You are a very lucky man to have a father who gives you a letter of credit on the Collector-General of the Department of Meurthe. As a matter of fact, I am, from the economic point of view, inferior

to my servants. I have suffered horribly ever since I started to earn ninety-nine francs a month.

"But what is it that is most esteemed by the world of which I have caught a glimpse? The man who has amassed a few million or who has bought a newspaper and gets himself praised for eight or ten years at a stretch. (Isn't that the case of M. de Chateaubriand?) For a man with a fortune like myself, isn't the supreme happiness to be considered a man of wit by women of wit?

"Didn't M. de Talleyrand launch his career by holding his own with a clever word against the overweening pride of Madame la Duchesse de Grammont? With the exception of my poor mad republicans, I can see nothing in the world that calls for esteem. As far as I can see there is always some charlatanism in everybody's merit. My republicans are perhaps mad, but, at least, they are not base." Lucien's reasoning could not go beyond this conclusion. A wise man would have said to him: "See a little more of life and you will perceive that things have other aspects. For the moment simply be satisfied not to injure anyone basely. You have really seen too little of life to be able to judge these profound questions. Wait—and keep cool."

Lucien lacked such a counselor, and for want of those words of wisdom lost himself in the clouds.

"So my merit will hang on the opinion of a woman, or a hundred women, of the fashionable world! What could be more ridiculous! What contempt I have always professed for a man in love, like my cousin Edgard, who stakes his happiness, his very self-esteem, on the judgment of a young woman who spends her whole morning at Victorine's discussing the merits of a gown, or ridiculing a man of merit like Monge because he is common-looking!

"But on the other hand, to court the favor of men of the common people, as one has to do in America, is really beyond

my powers. I require elegant manners, fruits of the corrupt government of Louis XV; and yet, who were the men of note in such a state of society? A Duc de Richelieu, a Lauzun, whose memoirs are a true picture of life."

These reflections plunged Lucien into a state of extreme agitation. His religion, Virtue and Honor, was at stake, and according to this religion: without virtue, no happiness. "Great God! To whom can I turn for advice? From the point of view of a man's real value, where do I stand? Am I in the middle of the list, or am I at the very end? . . . And Filloteau, in spite of all my scorn for him, has an honorable place; he gave some famous blows in Egypt; he was recompensed by Napoleon who was a good judge of military valor. Henceforth no matter what Filloteau does, that will always remain; nothing can take from him this honorable rank: a brave man, made captain by Napoleon in Egypt!"

This was a profound lesson in modesty, and above all painful. Lucien had vanity, and that vanity had been constantly excited by an *excellent* education.

A few days after the arrival of the anonymous letters, as Lucien was walking through a deserted street, he met two non-commissioned officers. They had slender and well-knit figures and were dressed with remarkable care. They bowed to him in a curious way. Lucien watched them as they passed, and soon saw them retracing their steps in a very pointed manner. "Either I am very much mistaken or these gentlemen may well be Vindex and Julius. They have stationed themselves here from a sense of honor, to sign, as it were, their anonymous letter. It is I who am ashamed now, and I should like to undeceive them. I respect their opinions, their ambition is honorable. But I cannot prefer America to France. Money is not everything to me, and democracy is much too crude to my way of thinking."

## CHAPTER SEVEN

THIS DEBATE with himself on the Republic poisoned several weeks of Lucien's inner life. Vanity, that bitter fruit of the education of the upper classes of society, was his tormentor. Young, rich, and to all appearances happy, he could never give himself up whole-heartedly to pleasure. He might have been a young Protestant. He was rarely impulsive; he thought himself obliged to act with a great deal of circumspection. "If you throw yourself at a woman's head, she will despise you," his father once said to him. In a word, society, which in the Nineteenth Century has so little pleasure to offer, frightened him at every turn. For Lucien, as for most of his contemporaries who frequented the *Bouffes*, childish vanity, an extreme and constant fear of not observing the thousand little rules established by our civilization, took the place of all those ardent impulses which, in the reign of Charles X, had stirred the hearts of young Frenchmen. He was the only son of a wealthy man, and it takes many years to overcome such a handicap, the envy of most mortals.

We admit that Lucien's vanity was piqued. For eight or ten hours every day he was thrown among men who knew much more than he did about the only subject on which he would permit himself to talk to them. Lucien's comrades-in-arms, with the polite acrimony of vindictive conceit, tried at all times to make him feel their superiority. These gentlemen were furious because they seemed to realize instinctively that Lucien considered them fools. And you should have seen their superior air when Lucien made a mistake in the time, according to regulations, fatigue cap and stable breeches should be worn.

Lucien remained unmoved and cold in the midst of their affected gestures and politely ironic smiles. He thought his companions were being gratuitously offensive; he was not sufficiently objective to see that it was just their little way of taking revenge for all the display of wealth he indulged in.

"After all, these gentlemen can do me no harm," he said to himself, "so long as I don't talk too much and do as little as possible. Silence is the *watch-word*, to do as little as possible, the *plan of campaign*." Lucien laughed as he emphasized these words of his new calling. Having no one with whom he could talk freely, he had to laugh with himself.

For eight or ten hours, the time it takes a man to earn ninety-nine francs, he could talk of nothing but maneuvers, regimental accounts, the price of horses, the great question of whether it was better for the cavalry corps to buy directly from breeders, or whether it was more advantageous for the government to take charge of the training from the outset in the remount station. In the latter case the horses came to nine hundred and two francs; but many of them also died, etc., etc.

Lieutenant-Colonel Filloteau had assigned him an old lieutenant, an officer of the Legion of Honor, to teach him the science of war. But this worthy man thought himself obliged to perorate. And what eloquence! Lucien was not able to decline his services and began to read aloud with him the *rhapsody* entitled *Victories and Conquests of the French*. But when Gauthier recommended the Memoirs of Marshal Gouvion-Saint-Cyr, Lucien picked out the accounts of battles in which the brave lieutenant had himself figured, and the latter, moved to tears at hearing these printed accounts of the events of his youth read aloud, would relate in detail all he had seen. The old lieutenant was often sublime, recounting with simplicity those heroic days when no one was a hypocrite! This simple peasant was especially admirable when he described the site of a battle, and recalled a multitude of details which the rest of

us would never have remembered, but which, told with that accent of truth, made Lucien's mad love for the armies of the Republic soar with fresh enthusiasm. The lieutenant was extremely entertaining when he described the revolutions that occurred within the regiment after unexpected promotions.

These lessons, from which Lucien came away with sparkling eyes, were very much ridiculed by his comrades. The idea of a man of twenty letting himself be taught like a schoolboy! And worse still, by an old soldier who couldn't open his mouth without murdering the French language! But Lucien's studied reserve and icy gravity disconcerted these would-be wits, and prevented anyone from acquainting him with this general opinion to his face.

Lucien did not see that there was anything wrong with his conduct, and yet, we must admit that it would have been difficult for anyone to commit more blunders than he. There was nothing he did, down to the very choice of an apartment, that was not wrong. What effrontery—a simple second-lieutenant setting himself up in the lodgings of a lieutenant-colonel! (I am simply repeating what everyone was saying.) Before him the apartment of the worthy M. Bonard had been occupied by Monsieur le Marquis, Thomas de Busant de Sicile, lieutenant-colonel of the regiment of hussars which the Twenty-seventh Lancers had just replaced.

Lucien saw nothing of all this. He attributed the more than chilly welcome he was accorded to the aversion of vulgar people to those belonging to a more distinguished class of society. He would have rejected any evidence of friendliness as a snare, and yet this restrained but unanimous hate which he read in every eye, made his heart ache. We beg the reader not to take him for a fool; this heart was still so young! At the *École Polytechnique*, arduous and constant work, enthusiasm for science, love of liberty, the generosity natural to extreme youth, neutralized vindictive passions and the effects of envy. In the regi-



ment, on the contrary, there reigned a most boring idleness. For, at the end of six months what was there to do, after the duties of the profession no longer constituted the main occupation of life?

Four or five young officers with rather more pleasing manners than the rest, and whose names were not on the list of spies revealed to him by the anonymous letter, might have inspired in our hero ideas of a closer acquaintance had they not evinced perhaps an even more marked aversion to him, or at least their way of showing it was even more stinging. The only friendliness he noticed was in the eyes of a few non-coms who bowed to him eagerly and in a peculiar manner, especially when they passed him in some remote street.

Besides old Lieutenant Joubert, Lieutenant-Colonel Filloteau had engaged a sergeant to teach him the various evolutions of a platoon, a squadron, and a regiment.

"You can't possibly offer this brave old soldier less than forty francs a month," Filloteau told him.

And Lucien, whose bruised heart was about ready to accept Filloteau as a friend (after all, had he not known Desaix, Kleber, Michaud, and the glorious days of Sambre and Meuse), discovered that the brave Filloteau, whom he had cast in the role of hero, appropriated to himself one half of the forty francs intended for the sergeant.

Lucien had had an immense pine table made, and on this table little pieces of wood like two gaming dice joined together, represented the horsemen of a cavalry regiment. Under the direction of the sergeant he practiced maneuvering these soldiers two hours every day; and these were perhaps the best hours of the day.

Little by little, this way of living became a habit. All the sensations of the young second-lieutenant were dulled; nothing any longer gave him either pleasure or pain, and he could see nothing to do about it. He had conceived a profound disgust

for all men, even for himself. He had often refused to go to the country Sundays to dine with his host M. Bonard, but one day, having accepted the grain merchant's invitation, he came back to the city with M. Gauthier, whom the reader already knows as the leader of the republicans and the principal editor of the *Aurore*. This M. Gauthier was an enormous young man, built like a Hercules. He had beautiful blond hair which he wore too long, but this was his only affectation. His simple gestures, the extreme energy he put into everything he did, an unmistakable good faith, all saved him from seeming vulgar. On the other hand, the most blatant and cheap vulgarity was the distinguishing mark of his associates. As for him, he was serious; he never lied; he was a sincere fanatic. But through his passion for a France *self-governed*, there shone a beautiful soul. Lucien amused himself on the road home comparing him with M. Fléron, the leader of the opposite party. M. Gauthier, far from profiting by his position, made a bare living at his trade of cadastral surveyor. As for his paper the *Aurore*, it cost him five or six hundred francs a year besides all the many months in prison.

After a few days this man seemed to Lucien the very opposite of everything he had seen in Nancy. Above that enormous body, like his uncle Bonard's, Gauthier had the head of a genius with its beautiful curly blond hair. At times he could be really eloquent when he talked about the future happiness of France and the good times to come when government offices would be held without pay and rewarded only with honor.

Gauthier's eloquence touched Lucien, but did not succeed in destroying his chief objection to a republic: the necessity of paying court to mediocre people.

After six weeks, during which their acquaintance developed almost into intimacy, Lucien discovered by chance that Gauthier was a geometrician of the first order. This discovery moved him deeply; what a difference from Paris! Lucien loved

higher mathematics passionately. From now on he spent whole evenings with Gauthier, discussing either Fourier's theories on the heat of the earth, or the soundness of the discoveries of Ampère, or finally that fundamental question: did the habit of analysis make one less able to observe the facts in experimentation.

"Be careful," Gauthier warned him, "I am not only a geometer, I am a republican and one of the editors of the *Aurore*. If General Thérance or your Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin hear of our conversations, they will do nothing to me—they've already done me all the harm they can—but you will be dismissed from the army or sent to Algiers as a bad lot."

"That might be the best thing that could happen to me," Lucien retorted. "Or to speak with the mathematical exactitude we both love, augmentation of punishment in my case would be impossible; I think, without exaggerating, I can say that I have reached the very height of boredom."

Gauthier did not mince words in trying to convert Lucien to American democracy. Lucien listened to him for a long time; he then replied with perfect frankness:

"My dear friend, you really console me. Now I see that if, instead of being a second-lieutenant in Nancy, I were a second-lieutenant in Cincinnati or Pittsburgh, I should be even more bored, and, as you know, the consciousness of a greater evil is always a consolation, perhaps the only one I am capable of appreciating. In order to earn ninety-nine francs a month and my own self-respect, I left my native city where I used to spend my time most agreeably."

"Who forced you to do it?"

"I threw myself into this inferno of my own free will."

"In that case leave it! Fly!"

"Paris is now spoiled for me. If I returned I should no longer be what I was before donning this fatal green uniform: a

young man who perhaps one day would amount to something. Now I would be looked upon as a young man incapable of being anything, even a second-lieutenant."

"But what do you care what people think if you are really enjoying yourself?"

"Alas! I possess vanity, a thing which you, my wise friend, cannot understand. My position would be intolerable. I should be unable to answer certain pleasantries. The only thing that could possibly extricate me from the mess I've got myself into without knowing what I was doing, is a war."

Lucien had the courage to write this entire confession and the story of his new friendship to his mother. But he begged her to return his letter. Their correspondence was in the tone of the frankest friendship. He wrote to her: "I won't say my misfortune, but rather my boredom would be intensified if I were to become the subject of my father's jokes and of those amusing men whose absence makes life seem so dull."

Happily for Lucien his intimacy with M. Gauthier, whom he met in the evenings at M. Bonard's, did not come to the knowledge of Colonel Malher. But the commander's ill-will toward Lucien was no secret in the regiment. Perhaps this worthy man would have welcomed a duel to rid him of this young republican who enjoyed protection in too high quarters to permit his persecuting him *on a grand scale*.

One morning the colonel sent for Lucien, and only after waiting for at least three long quarters of an hour in a dirty ante-chamber where three lancers were shining twenty-four pairs of riding boots, was he introduced into the presence of that dignitary. "He has staged all this," Lucien said to himself, "but the only way to defeat his bad faith is not to notice it."

"It has been reported, sir," began the colonel with pinched lips and marked arrogance, "it has been reported that you eat very lavishly in your own lodgings. This I cannot countenance. Rich or poor, you must eat at the forty franc ordinary with

your comrades-in-arms. Good-day, sir. I have nothing more to say."

Lucien was boiling with rage. No one had ever spoken to him in such a tone. "So, even at meals, I shall be forced to remain with my amiable comrades whose sole pleasure, it seems, is to try to crush me with their superiority. I might truthfully say with Beaumarchais: *My life is a battle*. Oh, very well," he laughed to himself, "I'll put up with it. Dévelroy shall not have the satisfaction of repeating that I have taken the trouble to be born. . . . I shall reply that I have also taken some trouble to live." And Lucien went off on the spot to pay a month's board in advance. That evening he dined at the ordinary and conducted himself with admirable coldness and disdain.

Two days later, at six o'clock in the morning, the non-commissioned adjutant who was supposed to be the colonel's cat's-paw entered his room. The man said to him smoothly:

"Lieutenants and second-lieutenants, without the colonel's permission, are not to go farther than a radius of two leagues beyond the Grande Place."

Lucien made no reply, which nettled the adjutant, who arrogantly offered to leave a written description of all the landmarks along the different roads to assist him in recognizing the two-league limit. You must know that the execrable, sterile, dried-up plain on which the genius of Vauban had seen fit to place the city of Nancy, has no sign of a passable hill within three leagues. Lucien at that moment would have given anything in the world to throw the adjutant out of the window.

"May I ask, sir," he said, with an air of innocence, "when the said lieutenants and second-lieutenants mount their horses to go riding, are they permitted to trot or only to go at a walk?"

"Sir, I shall report your question to the colonel," replied the adjutant, crimson with rage.

A quarter of an hour later, an orderly came galloping back with the following order:

Second-Lieutenant Leuwen will keep quarters twenty-four hours for having held up to ridicule an order of the Colonel.

Malher de Saint-Mégrin.

"O Galilean, thou shalt not prevail against me!" cried Lucien.

This last provocation roused Lucien from his state of listless despondency. Nancy was horrible, the military profession had nothing whatever to recommend it except the far-off echoes of Fleurus and Marengo; but Lucien was determined to prove to his father and Dévelroy that he was able to endure all its vexations.

The very day of Lucien's confinement, the top ranking officers of the regiment had, in their naïveté, attempted to pay their respects on the noble ladies d'Hocquincourt, de Chasteller, de Puylaurens, de Marcilly, de Commercy, knowing, as they did, that some of the officers of the Twentieth Hussars had been received at those houses. We shall not insult our reader's intelligence by pointing out the innumerable reasons that made this proceeding an unbelievable blunder which the most unsophisticated young man from Paris would not have committed.

The visit of these officers belonging to a regiment that was considered *Juste-milieu*, was received with an impertinence which when recounted to our hero did much to enliven his confinement. In his eyes the details were an honor to the wit of the ladies in question.

When Mesdames de Marcilly and de Commercy, who were both indeed very old, saw these gentlemen enter their drawing rooms, they affected an air of terror as though they believed them to be agents of the Reign of Terror of 1793. At Madame de Puylaurens and Madame d'Hocquincourt's, their reception

was somewhat different. These ladies had apparently given their servants instructions to make the ranking officers of the Twenty-seventh look ridiculous; for when they left, their passage through the ante-chamber was the signal for a burst of laughter from the lackeys. The rare remarks the two ladies had, in their amazement, been able to think of, had been couched in terms of an impudence that fell just short of the point where it becomes coarseness and is in danger of calling in question the good breeding of those who employ it. At Madame de Chasteller's, where the service was more punctilious, the door was simply closed to these gentlemen.

"And, by gad, the colonel calmly swallowed it all like water," said Filloteau who, under cover of the night when his movements would not be noticed, had come to see Lucien and console him in his imprisonment. "The colonel even wanted to make us believe on leaving Madame d'Hocquincourt, who never stopped laughing at us the whole time, that, after all, we had been received graciously and gaily, one might say, informally, really like old friends! . . . By God! in the old days, when we crossed the whole of France from Mayence to Bayonne on our way to Spain, what wouldn't we have done to the windows of a female like that! A damned old woman, the Comtesse de Marcilly I think it was, who looks ninety at least, had the effrontery to offer us wine when we got up to leave, the way you'd give a drink to a carter!"

Lucien heard many further details as soon as he could go out again.

We forgot to say that M. Bonard had introduced him into several good middle-class homes. He had found the same perpetual affectation that he had encountered at Mademoiselle Sylviane's, and the same pretensions to simplicity. He had noticed, much to his sorrow, that the bourgeois husbands kept reciprocal watch over each others' wives, not through any concerted arrangement but simply through envy and natural

meanness. Two or three of *their ladies*, to speak their own language, had very beautiful eyes, and eyes which had deigned to address him. But how could he manage a tête-à-tête? And besides, what affectations surrounded them, to say nothing of their own! What eternal games of Boston he would have to play with the husbands and, above all, what uncertainty of success! Without the least experience and rather dejected by what had happened to him, Lucien preferred to bore himself evenings by himself than to play Boston with these husbands who always took good care to place him with his back turned to the prettiest woman in the room. He was deliberately reduced to the role of observer. The ignorance of these poor women is unimaginable. Fortunes are moderate and the husbands subscribe in common to the newspapers they read and which their better halves never see. Their role is entirely reduced to bearing children and nursing them when they are ill. Only Sundays on the promenade, taking their husbands' arms, they display the dresses and gaudy shawls with which the former have judged fit to reward the faithful accomplishment of their duties as mother and spouse.

If Lucien had shown himself more assiduous in his attentions to Mademoiselle Sylviane, it was only because to see her was such a simple matter. He had only to enter a shop. Our hero was apparently following in the footsteps of M. Fléron the prefect who, every evening, with marked affectation and mawkish air, would knock at the door of the wineshop and, without pausing there, the first magistrate of the department would enter directly into the parlor behind the shop. There he found himself in the home of one of the most influential proprietors of the department, as he took pains to point out in his letters to his minister.

Lucien now only put in an appearance at Mademoiselle Sylviane Berchu's once a week, and each time he came away



determined not to go again for a month. He had for a while been a daily visitor. The worthy Filloteau's recital and his resentment against the noble ladies, the discomfiture of Lucien's superior officers whose attitude toward Lucien kept him at such a distance, all awakened in him a spirit of contradiction. "Here is a set of people that refuses to receive anyone who shows himself in the uniform I wear! Well then, let's try to break in. Very possibly they are as boring as the bourgeois, but I must find out. At least, I'd have the satisfaction of triumphing over great odds. I must ask my father for letters of introduction."

But to write to such a father in a serious vein was not easy. It was M. Leuwen's practice, outside his bank, never to read a letter through to the end unless he found it amusing. "The easier the thing is for him to do, the more likely he will be to think up some trick to play on me. He handles all M. Bonpain's business on the Bourse, and M. Bonpain is attorney for the noble Faubourg, the man who manages all the drives for party funds in the provinces, and for everything that is sent to Spain. M. Bonpain, with just a word or two, could assure me a brilliant reception in all the noble houses of Lorraine." With these ideas in mind, Lucien wrote to his father.

Instead of the enormous packet that he awaited with impatience, all that was forthcoming from his father's parental solicitude was the briefest possible letter written on the smallest possible piece of paper.

Most gracious Second-Lieutenant, you are young, you are considered rich, and you no doubt think yourself handsome. At least you have a handsome horse since it cost a hundred and fifty louis. And in your part of the country, the horse is more than half the man. You must be even worse than an ordinary Saint-Simonian not to have been able to force the doors of your petty nobles of Nancy. I wager that Méllinet [one of Lucien's servants] has got farther

than you have, and can pick and choose his pleasures any evening. My dear Lucien, *studiate la mathematica* and grow profound. Your mother is well, as is also your devoted servant,

François Leuwen.

This letter plunged Lucien into the devil of a mood. But the crowning touch came that evening when, on returning from his ride, within the two-league limit, he caught sight of his servant, Méllinet, sitting outside a shop in the midst of a bevy of women, and every one as merry as possible.

"My father is a sage," he thought, "and I am a simpleton."

Almost at the same moment he noticed a reading room where the lamps were just being lighted. He had his horse taken away, and went in to try to divert his mind and get over his irritation. The next morning at seven o'clock, Colonel Malher sent for him.

"Sir," said his superior with a magisterial air, "republicans, perhaps, exist, but I should prefer not to have them in the regiment which the King has entrusted to me."

And as Lucien looked at him in amazement:

"It is useless to deny it, sir, you spend your time at Schmidt's reading room in the Rue de la Pompe opposite the Hôtel de Pontlevé. It has been called to my attention as a hotbed of anarchy, frequented by the most brazen Jacobins of Nancy. Are you not ashamed, sir, to have associated yourself with the riffraff that forgathers there every night? You have been seen to pass constantly in front of the shop and to exchange signs with these people. One might be readily led to suppose that it was you who were the anonymous subscriber of Nancy mentioned by the Minister to M. le General, Baron Thérance, as having sent a contribution for the *National's* fine . . .

"Silence, sir!" cried the colonel angrily as Lucien seemed to wish to say something in his turn. "If you had the misfortune of admitting such a folly, I should be obliged to send you to General Headquarters at Metz, and I should hate to lose a

young man who has already missed his vocation once before."

Lucien was furious. Several times while the colonel was talking, he had been on the point of seizing the pen lying on the large ink-stained and very dirty pine table behind which this uncivil and despotic personage was entrenched, and of writing out his resignation. Only the perspective of his father's teasing restrained him. After a moment or two he began to see that it was more in keeping with manly dignity to force the colonel to recognize that someone had deceived him or tried to deceive him.

"Colonel," he said in a voice that trembled with rage, but on the whole controlling himself rather well, "I was expelled from the *École Polytechnique*, I was called a republican, that is true. But I was only a rattle-brained schoolboy. Except for mathematics and chemistry, I know nothing. I have never made a study of politics, but I can discern the gravest objections to all the forms of government. It is therefore impossible for me to have an opinion on the one best suited to France. . . ."

"What, sir, you dare to admit that you are not convinced that only the King's government . . ."

Here we suppress three pages of monologue which the worthy colonel recited in one breath, having read them a few days previously in a newspaper subventioned by the government.

"That was way over the head of this cut-throat spy," thought Lucien while the sermon was going on, and he tried to think of a phrase that would say a great deal in few words.

"I entered that reading room yesterday for the first time in my life," he said finally, "and I will give fifty louis to anyone who can prove the contrary."

"Money has nothing to do with the question," replied the colonel sarcastically. "We all know that you have plenty, and it seems that you know it better than anyone else. Yesterday,

sir, in Schmidt's reading room, you read the *National* and never even glanced at the *Journal de Paris*, nor the *Débats*, lying in the middle of the table."

"There was evidently a very accurate observer present," thought Lucien. He then began to recount everything he had done while in the place, to the smallest detail, so that the colonel could not deny:

1. That Lucien yesterday, for the first time since he had joined the regiment, had read a paper in a public place;
2. That he had spent only forty minutes in Schmidt's reading room;
3. That he had been occupied all that time solely in reading a long article of six columns on the *Don Giovanni* of Mozart, which he proved by repeating the principal headings.

After a séance of two hours, and the pettiest cross-examination by the colonel, Lucien, pale with suppressed rage, finally left. The colonel's bad faith was evident; but our hero felt a keen pleasure in having reduced him to silence on every one of the charges.

"I'd rather live with my father's lackey," said Lucien to himself, pausing under the *porte-cochère*. "What boors!" he repeated a dozen times during the day. "But all my friends will take me for a fool if at twenty, and with the finest horse in the city, I am a *fiasco* in a *Juste-milieu* regiment, where money is everything. In order to give them something worth talking about in Paris in case I resign, I must fight a duel. That is the custom on joining a regiment, at least so it is thought in our drawing rooms. And, faith, if I lose my life I don't lose very much."

After dinner, at the conclusion of the evening stable call which took place in the courtyard of the barracks, he said to several officers who were leaving at the same time:

"Spies, who are plentiful around here, have accused me to

the colonel of the dullest of sins: I am supposed to be a republican. It seems to me that I have a standing in the world and a fortune to lose. I should like to know who my accuser is, first to clear myself, and after that to give him one or two little caresses with my riding-whip."

There was a dead silence for a moment, then everyone began talking about something else.

That evening, Lucien was returning from his ride, when, in the street, his servant handed him a neat-looking letter carefully folded. He opened it and saw a single word: *Renegade*. At that moment Lucien was perhaps the unhappiest man in all the regiments of lancers in the army.

"That's how they do everything! Like children," he thought. "Who told those poor young men that I thought the way they did? I should be a great fool to dream of governing the State, I haven't even been able to govern my own life." For the first time in his life Lucien thought of killing himself. Excessive boredom had made him bitter, and he no longer saw things as they really were. For example, in his regiment there were eight or ten officers who were very agreeable. He was blind; he could see no merit in them.

Next day when Lucien again spoke of republicanism to two or three of the same officers:

"My dear fellow," one of them rejoined, "you bore us with your eternal refrain. What the devil do we care if you went to the École Polytechnique, or if you were expelled, or if you've been slandered? I've had my own troubles. Six years ago I sprained my ankle, but I don't keep boring my friends with it."

Lucien would not have taken up the accusation of being boring. From the first days of his joining the corps he had said to himself, "I am not here to educate all the unmannerly people in the regiment. I must not protest until one of them

does me the honor to be cruder than usual." At the imputation that he was boring, Lucien, after a moment's silence, replied:

"I really am boring I am afraid, it happens to me once in a while, and I am willing to take your word for it, sir. But I am determined not to allow anyone to accuse me of republicanism. I should like to underline my declaration with a stroke of my sword, and I should be infinitely obliged if you would be good enough to measure yours with mine."

This speech seemed to resuscitate all these poor young men. Soon Lucien was surrounded by twenty officers. This duel was a stroke of luck for the entire regiment. It took place that very evening in a perfectly dreary and dirty corner of the ramparts. They fought with swords, and both the adversaries were wounded, but without the State's running any risk of losing either of them. Lucien had a deep cut in his upper arm.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CHIEF SURGEON of the regiment, *Chevalier* Bilars, as he insisted on being called, a kind of charlatan but not a bad sort, who came from the Upper Alps, made his appearance early the next morning. The adversary's sword had grazed an artery. *Chevalier* Bilars exaggerated the danger which was naught, and returned two or three times during the day. The "library," as the *Chevalier* called it, of our admirable second-lieutenant, was furnished with the rarest editions, such as kirschwasser 1810, twelve-year-old Marie Brizard anisette from Bordeaux, eau-de-vie of Danzig full of gold flakes, etc., etc. The *Chevalier*, who was fond of "reading," spent days on end with his patient, rather to the latter's annoyance.

From him Lucien learned of a doctor in Nancy who was famous for his exceptional medical skill and who was, moreover, a favorite in royalist circles because of his eloquence and his ferocious support of the legitimate cause. Du Poirier was his name. From everything Chevalier Bilars said, Lucien understood that this doctor might well be the great factotum of Nancy. In any case he must be an amusing rascal quite worth cultivating.

"Tomorrow, my dear doctor, you must bring this gentleman, Du Poirier, to see me, without fail. Tell him that I am in grave danger."

"But you are not in danger at all!"

"Yes, but isn't it logical to begin our acquaintance with so notorious a schemer with a lie? Once he is here you mustn't contradict me. Let me do the talking. We shall certainly hear famous stories about Henri V and Louis XIX, and may possibly have some fun."

"Your wound is entirely surgical, and I don't see what a medical doctor . . ."

In the end Chevalier Bilars consented to fetch the doctor because he knew that if he did not bring him, Lucien could very well write to Du Poirier himself.

The celebrated doctor came the next day. "This man has all the earmarks of a famous fanatic," thought Lucien. The doctor had not been with our hero more than five minutes before he was poking him familiarly in the ribs as he talked. This M. Du Poirier was the worst kind of a vulgarian, and one who seemed proud of his coarse and familiar manners. A hog, in much the same way, wallows in the mire with what seems to the spectator a sort of voluptuous insolence. But Lucien had hardly time to notice his extreme absurdity; it was perfectly evident that it was not through vanity nor for the sake of trying to appear Lucien's equal or superior that Du Poirier

took such a familiar tone with him. Lucien was under the impression that he had before him a man of great merit carried away by the urgent need of expressing thoughts which oppressed him by their profusion and compelling force. An older man than Lucien would have noticed that Du Poirier's impetuosity did not prevent him from taking advantage of the familiarity he had assumed, nor from realizing all its advantages. When not carried away by what he was saying, he had just as many little vanities as any other Frenchman. Of all this Chevalier Bilars saw nothing, and thought Du Poirier too uncouth to be allowed in the lowest tavern.

"But no," said Lucien to himself, having for a moment believed in the passionate conviction of a veritable genius, "this man is a hypocrite. He is too clever to let himself be carried away. He never makes a move except after careful calculation. This excess of vulgarity and bad manners, combined with such lofty thinking, must have a purpose." Lucien was all ears. The doctor talked about everything under the sun, but especially about politics. He pretended to have inside information about everything.

"But, my dear sir," cried the doctor, suddenly interrupting his endless dissertation on the happiness of France, "in another moment you will take me for a Paris doctor who tries to be witty, and talks to his patient about everything except his malady."

He then examined Lucien's arm and recommended absolute quiet for a week.

"Away with all these poultices! Forget about medicaments, and if there is no sign of any change you can safely forget all about this little scratch."

While Dr. Du Poirier was examining his wound and taking his pulse, Lucien was satisfied that his own expression had been admirable. Dr. Du Poirier, as soon as he had finished



with Lucien's wound, resumed the great topic: the impossibility of the duration of the Louis-Philippe government.\*

Our hero had been too quick to decide that he could, without difficulty, amuse himself at the expense of a provincial wit and braggart by profession. He soon discovered that the logic of the provinces is superior to their light verse. Far from making sport of Du Poirier, he had all the trouble in the world not to fall into ridicule himself. One thing was sure, the presence of this strange animal had completely cured his boredom.

Du Poirier might have been fifty years old. His features were large and strongly marked. Two little gray-green eyes, deep-set in his head, kept darting about, moving constantly with extraordinary agility, and seeming to throw out sparks. They made you forget the length of the nose that separated them. At certain angles this unfortunate nose gave to the doctor's countenance the look of an alert fox: a decided disadvantage in an apostle. What completed the likeness, if one had the misfortune of noticing it, was the thick forest of tawny hair bristling over the doctor's head and temples. On the whole, once seen this was a physiognomy that could not be easily forgotten. In Paris it would perhaps have horrified fools; in the provinces where everyone is bored, anything that promises relief is eagerly welcomed, and the doctor was now the rage.

He had a vulgar face and yet his appearance was extraordinary and striking. Whenever the doctor thought his adversary had been convinced—and the moment he met anyone, that person became an adversary to be convinced and an adherent to be gained—his eyebrows would shoot up inordinately and his little gray eyes, wide open like a hyena's, would seem ready to pop out of his head. "Even in Paris," thought Lucien, "this

\* This is a legitimist speaking, as above it was a republican.

wild boar's head, this furious fanaticism, these impertinent manners, so fraught with eloquence and energy, would keep him from being ridiculous. A true apostle, a Jesuit." And Lucien watched him with extreme curiosity.

While Lucien was occupied with these reflections, the doctor had plunged into politics and seemed to be quite carried away by his subject. Partition of a patrimony at the death of the head of a family would have to be abolished. Above all the Jesuits must be re-established. As for the elder branch, it was not *legitimate* to drink a single glass of wine in France until it had been restored to its own, that is, reinstated in the Tuileries, etc., etc. And Du Poirier said nothing to soften the blinding glare of these stupendous truths, or to spare the prejudices of his young neophyte.

"How is it possible," cried the doctor all at once, "that you, a man well-born, with elegant manners, a fortune, an enviable position in society, a refined education, should have thrown in your lot with that vile *Juste-milieu*! You have become their soldier, you will fight their wars—not the true war whose very miseries, for generous hearts, are fraught with such nobility and charm, but a constabulary war, a war of rotten cabbages against wretched workingmen half dead with hunger. For you the expedition of the Rue Transnonain is the battle of Marengo . . ."

"My dear Chevalier," said Lucien, turning to the scandalized Doctor Bilars who thought himself obliged to defend the *Juste-milieu*. "My dear Chevalier, I have taken a notion to tell the doctor here certain little peccadillos of my youth which are altogether in the province of medicine, and which I shall confide to you too, but at some other time. There are certain things one only cares to confess to one person at a time."

In spite of this frank declaration, Lucien had some difficulty in getting rid of the Chevalier who was itching to talk politics, and whom Lucien erroneously suspected of being a spy.

The eloquence of Du Poirier was in no way restrained by this episode of the expulsion of the Chevalier. He continued to gesticulate furiously and to talk at the top of his voice.

"Can it be possible," he cried, "that you intend to vegetate in the boredom and pettiness of garrison life? Is this a role for a man like you? You must get out of it at once. The day the cannon will be fired—not the meaningless cannon of Antwerp, but our Nation's cannon, the one that will set French hearts beating, mine, sir, and yours—you will distribute a few louis around the ministry and be a second-lieutenant as before. And for a man of your stamp what does it matter whether he fights as second-lieutenant or captain? Leave the little vanity of epaulets to half-wits. The important thing for a man like you is nobly to pay his debt to his country; the important thing is to lead intelligently twenty-five peasants who have nothing but their courage; the important thing in this dubious age is to give proof of that sort of merit which alone cannot be accused of hypocrisy. The courage of a man who does not flinch under Prussian fire cannot be called hypocrisy. But drawing your sword on workingmen with nothing but fowling pieces with which to defend themselves and who are four hundred against ten thousand, proves absolutely nothing, except the lack of a noble heart and the desire for advancement. And observe the effect on public opinion: in this ignoble duel, homage due to courage will always be, as at Lyons, on the side that has neither cannons nor petards. But reasoning like Barême: even if you kill a great many workingmen, my dear *Second-Lieutenant*, it will take you six years at least to lose that fatal *second*."

"You'd think the animal had known me for months," thought Lucien. But such things, of so personal a nature and apparently most offensive, cannot be written. One must have heard them spoken with all the vehemence of this fiery fanatic,

of a man who knew how to present things with art and even, if necessary, with respect for the susceptibilities of a well-bred young man. The doctor had a gift for saying personal things and giving intimate advice, which in anyone else would have been considered an impertinence, in so spirited a manner, so amusingly, quite inoffensively, with apparently so little intention of assuming a tone of superiority, that everything was forgiven him. Besides he had such a comical way of saying these unwonted things, with such burlesque gestures that Lucien, Parisian though he was, had not the courage to put him in his place, and that was exactly what Du Poirier had counted on. Moreover, I do not think it would have seriously worried him even if he had been severely put in his place. These indiscreet souls are blessed with thick skins.

Finding himself all at once, and in such an unlooked-for fashion, rescued by this provincial doctor from the atrocious boredom which had been slowly killing him for two months, Lucien did not have the courage to deprive himself of such an entertaining spectacle. "I should be ridiculous," he thought, almost bursting with suppressed laughter, "if I let this crusading buffoon see that I found his manners not precisely suitable for a first visit; and besides, what would I gain by frightening him away?"

All that Lucien could do was to frustrate this ardent partisan of the Jesuits and Henri V in his attempt to obtain a confession. So far the most he had obtained was the chance of delivering a profuse and incongruous monologue uninterrupted; but quite like a true apostle Du Poirier appeared to be entirely accustomed to this absence of response, and did not seem to be in the least discountenanced.

For his part, Lucien could not succeed in deceiving this cunning doctor, except in the matter of his health. Anxious to keep the doctor from suspecting that he had been called in

only to relieve Lucien's boredom, Lucien pretended to be very much troubled by *flying gout*, a disease his father suffered from and whose symptoms he knew by heart. The doctor questioned him attentively and then gave him serious advice.

After this second consultation, Du Poirier got to his feet but did not leave. He redoubled his brusque incisive flattery. He tried his best to make Lucien talk. Our hero finally decided to master his smothered laughter and to satisfy his visitor. "If on this first call I do not show where I stand, this sycophant will not play out his whole hand, and will be less amusing."

"I do not pretend to deny it, sir; I am aware that I was not born *under a cabbage leaf*. I begin life with certain advantages. Finding two or three great commercial houses here in France which dispute the monopoly of the public's favors, I ask myself: shall I enroll myself in the *House of Henri V & Co.* or in the *National & Co.*? While waiting to make my final choice later on, I have accepted a small interest in the *House of Louis-Philippe*, the only one which is in a position to make any real and positive offers. And I confess that I only believe in something positive. I go so far as always to take for granted that the person talking to me is bent on deceiving me unless he offers me something positive. Under the king of my choice I have the advantage of learning my profession. However respectable and considerable the Republican Party and that of Henri V or Louis XIX may be, neither the one nor the other is able, at the moment, to supply the means of teaching me how to maneuver a squadron in the field. When I have learned my profession I shall no doubt find myself full of respect, as I am today, for the advantages of the mind, as well as for the fine positions to be acquired in society; but with a view to acquiring such a place in society myself, I shall definitely associate myself with that one of the three commercial houses which offers me the most advantageous conditions.

You will admit, sir, that an impetuous choice would be a great mistake, since, for the moment, I lack nothing that I could desire. What I need is a bit of a future, provided anyone does me the honor of considering me."

At this unlooked-for outburst that was uttered with such extraordinary vehemence, for Lucien was afraid of suddenly giving way to his pent-up laughter, the doctor seemed taken aback for a second. Finally he replied in the sanctimonious tone of a village priest:

"My dear sir, it gives me the greatest joy to see that you respect all that is respectable."

The sudden change from the free and satanic vein which until now had characterized his conversation, to this paternal and moral tone, made Lucien flush with pleasure. "I've been crafty enough for the fellow," he thought, "I have forced him to drop political arguments and to try appealing to my feelings." Lucien was in fine fettle.

"I respect everything or nothing, my dear Doctor," he replied lightly, and as the doctor looked astonished: "I respect all that my friends respect. But," he added as though to explain his thought, "who are my friends?"

At this trenchant question, the doctor all at once had recourse to platitudes. He was reduced to discoursing on ideas anterior to any experience in man's consciousness, of secret revelations made to every Christian, of devotion to the cause of God, etc., etc.

"All that may be true, or it may be false, it is immaterial to me," Lucien replied with the most flippant air. "I have not studied theology. In any case we have not got beyond the regions of positive interests. If ever we have the time, we might plunge together into the profundities of German philosophy, so entertaining and so clear, according to privileged persons. A friend of mine who is a scholar says that when

German philosophy is at the end of its arguments, it simply explains by an appeal to *faith* what it is unable to elucidate by means of plain reason. And, as I had the honor of telling you, sir, I don't know yet if, in the future, I shall seek employment in the business firm which considers faith the most necessary part of its capital investment."

"Well, sir, I must be going. I see that it won't be long before you are one of us," replied the doctor with the most satisfied air in the world, adding, as he poked Lucien in the ribs, "We are in perfect agreement. Meanwhile, I shall, I hope, drive away for some time those attacks of *flying gout*."

He wrote out a prescription and disappeared.

"That youngster is much less silly," thought the doctor as he went away, "than the other young Parisians who pass through here every year on their way to the camp of Lunéville or the valley of the Rhine. He recites very intelligently a lesson learned in Paris from one of those atheists of the Institute. All this pretty Machiavellism is happily nothing but idle chatter, and the irony that fills his discourse has not yet penetrated his soul. We shall win. We must get him to fall in love with one of our women. Madame d'Hocquincourt must soon make up her mind to dismiss that fellow d'Antin who amounts to nothing any longer, he is ruining himself."

Lucien now recovered his old Paris energy and gaiety. He had learned to think of all those serious things only since the atrocious void and complete *disinterest* that had assailed him since his arrival in Nancy.

Very late that same evening Gauthier came up to see him.

"You find me altogether enraptured with this doctor," Lucien announced. "There isn't a more amusing charlatan in the world."

"He is more than a charlatan," replied the republican Gauthier. "When he was young and had very few patients, he

used to prescribe a medicine and then rush to the apothecary's to make it up himself. Two hours later he would return to his patient to observe the effect. Today, he is to politics what he used to be to his profession. He is the man who should be prefect of the Department. In spite of his fifty years, the foundation of his character is the need of activity, he has the restless energy of a child. In short, he is madly in love with what most men can't abide: work. Talking, persuading, making things happen, and, above all, applying himself to overcoming difficulties, are necessities to him. He will dash up four flights of stairs to advise an umbrella manufacturer on the prevailing conditions in his trade. If the *legitimist* party had two hundred such men in France and knew how to use them, we republicans would be better treated by the government. What you do not realize yet is that Doctor Du Poirier has real eloquence. If he were not so fearful, fearful as a child, fearful to an incredible degree, he would be a dangerous man, even for us. He easily controls all the nobility of the province. He shares the honor with the Jesuit, M. Rey, our bishop's grand vicar. And not a week ago in an incident I shall tell you later, he got the better of Abbé Rey. I watch his moves closely because he is the rabid enemy of the *Aurore*. At the next elections, for which this restless soul is already working, he will permit one, or perhaps two, of the government candidates to win, on condition that the Prefect Fléron will let him suppress our *Aurore* and put me in prison. For he appreciates me as I appreciate him, and we like to argue together on occasion. He has two undeniable advantages over me: he is eloquent and amusing, and is the foremost man in his profession. He is justly considered the cleverest doctor in eastern France and is often called to Strasburg, to Metz, and to Lille. He only returned from Brussels three days ago."

"And so you would consult him if you were dangerously ill?"



"Heaven forbid! An inopportune dose of a good *medicine* would deprive the *Aurore* of the only one of its editors who, as Du Poirier says, is possessed of the devil."

"You tell me that they all have courage."

"Undoubtedly, and some of them are much cleverer than I am, but not all of them have, as their only love, the happiness of France and the Republic."

Lucien had now to endure on the part of the worthy Gauthier what the young men of Paris call a *thick slice* on America, on democracy, on forcing the government to choose prefects from among the members of the general assemblies, etc.

Listening to these arguments which he had already seen printed over and over again, Lucien thought: "What a difference in wit between a Du Poirier and a Gauthier, and yet the latter is probably as honest as the other is unscrupulous. In spite of my profound esteem for Gauthier I am falling asleep. After this, can I possibly say that I am a republican? This proves that I am not made to live in a republic. For me it would be the tyranny of dull people, and I cannot even endure the best of them with patience. What I need is a rascally and amusing prime minister like Walpole or M. de Talleyrand."

Meanwhile Gauthier was terminating his discourse with these words: *But we have no Americans in France.*

"You only have to take any little shop-keeper of Rouen or Lyon, miserly and devoid of imagination, and you have your American."

"Ah, how you grieve me!" cried Gauthier sadly, getting up to leave as one o'clock was striking.

"*Grenadier, oh, how you grieve me!*" sang Lucien when he was gone. "And yet I respect you with all my heart." After which he thought to himself: "The doctor's visit is a commentary on my father's letter. . . . One must howl with the wolves. M. Du Poirier very evidently wants to convert me.

Well then, I shall give him the pleasure of converting me. . . . I have just found the way of silencing the rogues: I shall answer their sublime doctrines, their hypocritical appeals, with this modest question: 'What do I get out of it?'"

## CHAPTER NINE

THE NEXT DAY very early in the morning, that restless soul, Doctor Du Poirier, knocked at Lucien's door. He too was in favor of avoiding the presence of Bilars. He counted on making use of arguments which he preferred to communicate to a single person at a time, it being advisable to remain in a position to deny them in case of necessity.

"If I cease reasoning like a rogue," thought Lucien as he saw Du Poirier, "this rogue is going to despise me." The doctor, bent on seducing this young man deprived of society and probably dying of boredom, began by flaunting the great aristocratic houses and pretty women of Nancy.

"Ah, you rascal," thought Lucien, "I see what you are driving at."

"What interests me especially, my dear sir," he said aloud with the dispirited air of a merchant who is the loser, "what interests me the most are your plans for the reform of the Civil Code and the question of partition. These are questions that can have a direct effect on my interests. For I am not without some of *this world's earthly goods*." (It amused Lucien to borrow the doctor's own provincial expressions.) "At the death of the head of the house you are opposed, I understand, to equal partition among the sons."

"Decidedly, sir, or else we shall fall into the horrors of democracy. An intelligent man will be forced, on pain of death,

to pay court to his neighbor, a man who sells matches. Most of our noble and distinguished families who are the hope of France, the only ones who have generous sentiments and lofty ideas, live in the country at this moment. They produce a great many children. Are we to see their fortunes divided, cut up piecemeal among all these children? Why, they would no longer have the leisure to develop distinguished sentiments, to cultivate high-mindedness; they would think of nothing but money, they would be vile proletarians just like the son of the printer next door. But on the other hand, what are we going to do with our younger sons, and how place them in the army as second-lieutenants after the highway robbery we have permitted those cursed non-coms? But that is a question to be taken up later on, a secondary question. First of all we must realize that it is impossible to restore the monarchy without a strong church, without having one priest, at least, to control a hundred peasants, for, with your absurd laws, our peasants have all become anarchists. Consequently, following the excellent example of England, I should place in the church at least one of the sons of every gentleman.

"I insist that even among the lower orders partition should not be equal. If you don't stop this evil pretty soon, all our peasants will know how to read and then, make no mistake about it, you will see an outbreak of incendiary writers. Everything will be called into question and you will soon have no sacred principles left. One must therefore begin with the principle, using as pretext the conservation of the land, that no property can be divided into parcels of less than two acres. . . .

"Let us take as an example what we know best, for that is always the surest way. Let us examine the interests of our noble families of Nancy."

"Ah, you old rascal!" thought Lucien.

Soon the doctor had reached the point where he was telling

Lucien that Madame d'Hocquincourt was the most seductive woman of Nancy; that there wasn't a wittier woman in the world than Madame de Puylaurens who had formerly been one of the shining lights of Madame de Duras' circle in Paris. Then, with a much more serious air, the doctor added that Madame de Chasteller was a very good "catch," and began to detail all her worldly goods.

"My dear Doctor, if I were in a matrimonial frame of mind my father has better than that for me in Paris. There is a certain young woman who is worth more than all these ladies put together."

"But you forget one little detail. What about birth?"

"Certainly it has its price," replied Lucien with a calculating air. "A young person who bears the name of *de Montmorency* or *de la Trémouille* would, in my position, be well worth a hundred, or even two hundred thousand francs. If I myself could boast a noble name, a great name in a wife would be worth a hundred thousand crowns. But, my dear Doctor, your provincial nobility is unknown thirty leagues away from home."

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed the doctor indignantly. "Madame de Commercy, cousin to the Emperor of Austria, descendant of the ancient sovereigns of Lorraine, unknown!"

"Absolutely, dear Doctor, like any M. Gontran or M. de Berval, who do not exist. The provincial nobility is known in Paris only through the ridiculous speeches of M. de Villèle's three hundred deputies. I am not considering marriage, however; for the moment I should much prefer prison. If I thought otherwise, my father would unearth some Dutch *bankeress* who would be enchanted to reign in my mother's drawing room, and very eager to buy such a privilege for a million or two, or even three."

Lucien was really comical, looking innocently at the doctor as he said these words.

The sound of that word *million* had a marked effect on the doctor's expression. "He is not impassive enough to make a good politician," thought Lucien. Never before had the doctor met a young man who, though brought up in the midst of great wealth, was absolutely free from hypocrisy. He began to be amazed at Lucien and to admire him.

The doctor was infinitely intelligent but he had never been to Paris, otherwise he would have detected duplicity. Lucien was not a man to be able to fool so arrant a knave as the doctor. Our second-lieutenant was by no means a finished actor. All he could boast was an easy manner and an ardent temperament.

Like all people who make a profession of Jesuitism, the doctor had an exaggerated idea of Paris. He saw it populated by furious atheists like Diderot or ironic ones like Voltaire, and by very powerful Jesuit Fathers who built enormous seminaries, bigger than barracks. He also had an exaggerated idea of Lucien; he was convinced that his patient was absolutely *heartless*. "Such ideas are not acquired," the doctor said to himself. And he began to respect our hero. "If this boy had spent four years in a regiment and taken a couple of trips to Prague or Vienna, he would be way beyond our d'Antins and Rollers. At least when we are alone together he doesn't rant."

After three weeks of an enforced retirement, rendered less tiresome by the almost constant presence of the doctor, Lucien went out for the first time; and for this first outing went to call on the postmistress, the worthy Mademoiselle Prichard, famous for her piety. There, on the pretext of fatigue, he sat down and, with a discreet and modest air, entered into conversation, finally taking out subscriptions to the *Quotidienne*, the *Gazette*, and the *Mode*. The worthy postmistress looked with veneration on this very elegant young man in uniform who took so many subscriptions, and to such papers!

Lucien had realized that in a *Juste-milieu* regiment any role

was preferable to that of a republican, that is, the man who fights for a government which has no emoluments to distribute. Many of the *honorable* deputies *literally* could not understand such a degree of absurdity and considered it immoral.\*

"It is only too evident that if I go on being a rational man, I shall not find the tiniest drawing room where I can spend an evening. According to the doctor, these people seem to be both too mad and too stupid to understand reason. They never get out of the superlative mood. But it is altogether too dull to be *Juste-milieu* like Colonel Malher, and to wait every morning the arrival of the post to know what platitude one must preach for the next twenty-four hours. As a republican I have just fought a duel to prove that I am not one; there is only one disguise left for me, and that is as the friend of 'privileges' and of the religion which supports them.

"It is the role indicated by my father's fortune. With the exception of a man of great wit, but extraordinary wit like my father, where can you find a rich man who is not a *conservative*? When they take exception to the nudity of my bourgeois name, I shall reply by pointing out the number and quality of my horses. As a matter of fact, isn't whatever distinction I enjoy in Nancy due entirely to my horse? And not in the least because it is a good horse but because it cost a great deal. Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin persecutes me, and, by gad, I am going to use high society as a club with which to crush him.

"This doctor should be very useful. He has altogether the air of those people who attach themselves to the privileged class with the function of thinking for them. It was formerly Cicero's role with the patricians of Rome extenuated by a century of happy aristocracy. It would be amusing if at heart this entertaining doctor did not believe in Henri V any more than in God, the Father."

\* Historical.

The austere virtue of M. Gauthier might well have taken grave exception to this role assumed so gaily. But M. Gauthier was rather like those virtuous women who speak ill of actresses; he was not even amusing when he talked about people who were considered exceptionally amusing.

The evening of the day on which Lucien had made the acquaintance of Mademoiselle Prichard, the doctor came to see him. He began a sermon on the subject of the workingmen in the tone of an infuriated Juvenal. He spoke of their appalling poverty, exploited by the Jacobin pamphlets, that would be the downfall of Louis-Philippe. All at once, as five o'clock struck, the doctor cut himself short in the middle of a sentence and rose to go.

"Why! what is it, Doctor?" asked Lucien in surprise.

"It is time for Benediction," tranquilly replied the doctor, piously lowering his little eyes, and simultaneously dropping the furious tone of a Juvenal declaiming against the court at the Tuileries.

Lucien burst out laughing. Then sincerely regretting this involuntary outburst, he tried to apologize to the doctor, but an uncontrollable paroxysm got the better of him again and he laughed till tears came to his eyes, and he was soon actually crying with laughter, all the time repeating:

"So sorry, Doctor, forgive me, where is it you are going? I did not quite hear what you said."

"To Benediction at the Chapel of the Penitents." And the doctor gravely and learnedly explained this religious ceremony in a pious, contrite and hardly audible voice, which was a strange contrast to the harsh, impudent, and piercing tones which were habitual with him.

"This is perfect," Lucien said to himself, trying to prolong the explanation and to keep back the laughter that was suffocating him. "This man is my salvation. Without him I was

going into a decline. But I really must find something to say to him or he will be offended."

"How would it be, Doctor, if I accompanied you?"

"Nothing could do you greater credit," he calmly replied, not in the least angry at Lucien's unaccountable mirth. "But I must, for conscience' sake, object to this second outing as I did to the first. The damp evening air may bring back the inflammation and if we happen to offend the great artery, then we may have to start thinking of the long journey."

"Have you no other objection?"

"You will expose yourself to the Voltairean witticisms of the gentlemen who are your comrades-in-arms."

"Bah! I am not afraid of them. They are much too good courtiers for that. The Colonel told us the first Sunday after our arrival, and in the most significant manner, that he always went to Mass."

"In spite of that, nine of these gentlemen, your comrades, again failed in this duty last Sunday. But, indeed, what difference do their stupid jokes make to you? Your way of silencing them is already well known in Nancy. And, moreover, your wise and prudent conduct has already borne fruit. No later than yesterday, at M. le Marquis de Pontlevé's, when it was alleged that you were a pillar of the reading room of that blackguard Schmidt, Madame de Chasteller deigned to come to your defense. Her maid, who spends her life at the window overlooking the Rue de la Pompe, had told her that Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin was most unfair to make a scene on that account; that never once had she seen you go into that shop although she often sees you ride by on your fine horse worth a thousand crowns, and that with your elegant and well-groomed air you didn't look—you must pardon the word, more accurate than refined, of a servant . . ." and the doctor hesitated.

"Come, Doctor, I won't be offended."



"Well, since you insist: that you didn't look like a *lousy republican*."

"I must admit, sir," replied Lucien gravely, "that I cannot imagine going to read in a *shop*!" This last word was admirably launched. A man born in the Faubourg Saint-Germain could not have done better. "In a few days," continued Lucien, "I shall be able to offer you the few papers an honest man can permit himself to read."

"I know, I know," said the doctor with a little air of provincial smugness. "Mademoiselle Prichard, our postmistress, who *thinks right*, told us this morning that we should soon have a fifth *Quotidienne* in Nancy."

"Oh, this is too much!" thought Lucien. "Is this uncouth individual trying to make fun of me?" Those words *fifth Quotidienne* said with such a contrite air were well calculated to trouble our hero's vanity.

In this as in many other things, Lucien showed that he was young, that is, unjust. Full of good intentions, he believed that he saw everything, whereas he had not seen a quarter of what there was to be seen in life. How was he to know that these little flourishes are as necessary to provincial hypocrisy as they would be ridiculous in Paris. And naturally as the doctor was living in the provinces he had every reason to speak their language.

"I shall soon see if this man is making fun of me or not," thought Lucien, as he summoned his servant to attach the elegant black ribbons that were to tie up the right sleeve of his uniform, and followed the doctor to Benediction. This holy ceremony took place at the Penitents, a charming little church freshly white-washed and without other ornament than a few confessionals of polished black walnut. "A modest place," thought Lucien, "but in excellent taste." He quickly perceived that the congregation was made up only of members of the best society.

Lucien saw the beadle offer a penny to a woman of a lower class, not badly dressed, who, seeing the church open, seemed on the point of entering.

"Go along, my good woman," said the beadle, "this is a private chapel."

The gratuity was evidently an insult. The respectable woman blushed up to her eyes and let the penny fall to the ground; the beadle looked around to see that no one was watching him, picked it up and put it back in his pocket.

"All these women around me and the few men with them certainly have a perfectly well-bred appearance," thought Lucien. "The doctor is not making fun of me any more than of the rest of the world. What more could I ask?" His vanity reassured, Lucien began to enjoy himself immensely. "It is the same here as in Paris, the nobility believes that religion makes people easier to govern. And my father says that it was the people's hatred for the priests that brought about the fall of Charles X! I shall ennoble myself by becoming devout."

He noticed that everyone carried a breviary. "To come here is not enough, one must be exactly like everyone else in the place." He appealed to the doctor. Immediately the latter left his seat and went to borrow one from Countess de Commercy who had brought several with her, carried by her lady companion in a velvet bag. The doctor returned with a superb little *quarto* and explained to Lucien the coat of arms that ornamented the magnificent binding. Across one corner of the escutcheon was the eagle of the House of Hapsburg. Madame de Commercy did indeed belong to the House of Lorraine, but to an elder branch that had been unjustly dispossessed and for some reason, not altogether clear, considered herself nobler than the Emperor of Austria. Lucien listened to all these fine things but feeling himself stared at, and fearing an attack of uncontrollable laughter, he kept his eyes stu-

diously bent on the spread eagle of Lorraine tooled on the cover of the breviary.

Toward the end of the service Lucien, whose chair almost touched the doctor's, felt sure that it would not be considered indiscreet if he let it be seen that he could hear the conversation the doctor was carrying on with five or six ladies, both married and maiden, all well along in years. These ladies addressed themselves to the good doctor, as they called him, but it was evident that their entire dialogue was composed in honor of the brilliant uniform whose presence in the Church of the Penitents was the great event of the evening.

"He is that young millionaire officer who fought a duel a couple of weeks ago," whispered a lady sitting near the doctor. "But it seems he *thinks right*."

"Why, I thought he had been mortally wounded!" replied her neighbor.

"Our good doctor saved him at the brink of the tomb," added a third.

"Isn't it true that he is a republican, and that his colonel tried to get him killed in a duel?"

"You can see for yourself that he isn't," the first replied with an air of marked superiority. "You can see for yourself he is one of us."

To which the second rejoined tartly:

"You may say what you like, my dear, but I have been assured that he is a near relative of Robespierre who was from Amiens. Leuwen is a North-of-France name."

Finding himself the hero of the conversation, Lucien could not help feeling pleased. Several months had passed since anything of the kind had happened to him. "They are so curious about me, these provincials," thought Lucien, "that sooner or later the doctor will have to present me to all these ladies who do me the honor of thinking that I am a member

of the late M. de Robespierre's family. I shall spend my evenings in a drawing room listening to the same sort of stuff I've just heard, and my father's respect for me will rise: I shall have got as far as Méllinet. With these respectable people you can say anything that comes into your head; you need have no fear of being ridiculous around here; they will never jest at anybody who caters to their mania." At this moment they began to talk about a subscription that was being taken up for the famous Berryer, who twice or three times a year gave proof of a really first class talent and saved the party from ridicule. Like all men of genius who are profoundly absorbed in a single idea, M. Berryer would very probably be obliged to sell his lands.

"I should gladly contribute a gold piece," said one of the singular individuals clustered around the doctor [Lucien learned later that it was Madame la Marquise de Marcilly], "but this M. Berryer, after all, is not *born* [not noble, in other words]. I have nothing smaller than gold with me, so I shall ask our good doctor to send his servant to me tomorrow after the eight-thirty Mass, and I shall give him some silver."

"Your name, Madame la Marquise," replied the doctor as though his dearest wish had been fulfilled, "will figure at the very head of page fourteen of my great register with a flexible back which I received, or rather, *we* received as a gift from our friends in Paris."

"I am like M. Jabalot of Versailles in *Je fais mes farces*," Lucien was thinking, elated by his success. It is true, all eyes were bent on his uniform. We should like to say by way of excuse for our hero, that since he had left Paris he had not once set foot in a salon. And to live deprived of stimulating conversation is *no life at all*.

"And I," he said aloud, "shall take the liberty of begging M. Du Poirier to put me down for forty francs. But my ambition

would be to see my name appear immediately after that of Madame la Marquise. That would, I am sure, bring me good luck."

"Very good, young man, very good," cried Du Poirier with the air of a fatherly prophet.

"If my comrades hear of this," thought Lucien, "look out for a second duel. Epithets of *hypocrite* are going to rain down on me. But how will they find out? They see no one belonging to this world. Possibly through the Colonel's spies. And faith, so much the better! I prefer *hypocrite* to republican."

Toward the end of the service Lucien was called upon for a great sacrifice. In spite of his immaculate white trousers he had to kneel down on the dirty stones of the Chapel of the Penitents.

## CHAPTER TEN

SOON everyone left the Chapel, and Lucien, seeing that his trousers were hopelessly soiled, decided to go home. "But this little mishap is perhaps a virtue," he told himself. And he endeavored to walk very slowly so as not to pass the groups of devout women who were slowly mincing along the deserted and grass-grown street.

"I am curious to know what the Colonel will find to object to in this," he was thinking as the doctor came up with him. And dissimulation not being one of his accomplishments, it was not difficult for his new friend to guess his thought.

"Your Colonel is nothing but a dull *Juste-milieu*. We know him well," cried Du Poirier with an air of authority. "He is a poor devil always shaking in his boots for fear that any moment he will see his dismissal announced in the *Moniteur*. But I wonder where that one-armed officer is, I don't see him

around, that *liberal*, decorated at Brienne, who now serves as the Colonel's spy."

They reached the end of the street and Lucien, walking slowly with his ears open to catch what people were saying about him, was worried for fear he might in some way betray his elation. He allowed himself a slight and very grave bow to three ladies walking almost in a line with him and speaking in loud voices. Then he shook the doctor's hand warmly and was gone. Mounting his horse he gave free rein to the laughter bottled up in him for the last hour. As he passed in front of Schmidt's reading room: "There you have the pleasure of being learned," he thought to himself. He caught sight of the one-armed liberal officer behind the greenish window-pane holding a copy of the *Tribune* and watching Lucien out of the corner of his eye as he passed. The next day among the élite of Nancy there was talk of nothing but the presence of a uniform at the Church of the Penitents and a uniform, moreover, whose right sleeve had been unsewn and tied up with ribbon. This was the young man who had come so near to appearing before his God. It was a day of triumph for Lucien. He did not, however, dare to risk Low Mass at eight-thirty. "This is going to bear fruit," he said to himself. "I must be seen at the Penitents whenever I am not on duty."

Toward ten o'clock he went in grand style to buy a *euchology* or breviary, magnificently bound by Muller. He would not allow the book to be wrapped in tissue paper, finding it amusing to carry it proudly under his left arm. "No one could have done it better in the middle of the *Restoration*. I am imitating Marshal S——, our Minister of War," and he laughed to himself. "With these provincials you can go as far as you please without danger. They don't know the meaning of the word ridicule." Still with his book under his arm, he went in person to take his forty francs to Du Poirier, and so had the opportunity of reading the list of subscribers. The top of each page

was reserved for the names preceded by a *de* but, by some lucky chance, the name of Lucien Leuwen was the only exception and began the page immediately following that inscribed with the name of *Madame la Marquise de Marcilly!*

Taking him to the door, M. Du Poirier said with a judicial air:

"You may rest assured, sir, that your Colonel will not leave you standing the next time he has something to say to you. He will at least be polite. As for his good will, that is another question."

Never was prediction destined to be more promptly fulfilled. A few hours later the Colonel, whom Lucien saw some distance away on the promenade, beckoned him to approach, and invited him for dinner the following day. Lucien was disgusted with his oily manner that reeked of bourgeois familiarity. "In spite of his fine uniform and his courage this man is nothing but a churchwarden inviting his neighbor, the district attorney, to dinner." As Lucien was leaving, the Colonel observed:

"Your horse has admirable shoulders. For hocks like those, two leagues is nothing. I authorize you to continue your rides as far as Darney."

Darney was a little town six leagues from Nancy.

"O omnipotent nostrum!" cried Lucien in a burst of laughter as he galloped off toward Darney.

The evening held an even greater triumph for Lucien. Dr. Du Poirier insisted on presenting him at Madame de Commercy's.

The Hôtel de Commercy, situated at the back of a half-paved courtyard ornamented with rows of clipped lindens that formed a high hedge, was at first glance very gloomy, but on the other side of the house, Lucien caught a glimpse of a delightfully green English garden where he would have strolled with pleasure. He was received in a large drawing

room hung in red damask with gilded moldings. The damask was a trifle faded but this fault was concealed by family portraits which produced an exceedingly handsome effect. All these heroes wore powdered wigs and were dressed in armor. There were immense armchairs with elaborately carved and gilded frames standing against the walls, and Lucien was terrified when he heard Madame de Commercy, turning to a lackey, utter the sacred words: "An armchair for Monsieur." To his relief, however, a very well-made modern armchair was brought forward instead.

The Countess was a tall thin woman who held herself very erect in spite of her advanced age. Lucien noticed that her laces were white. He detested yellowed laces. As for her expression, the lady had none. "Her features are not noble," thought Lucien, "but she wears them nobly."

Like the drawing room the conversation was noble, monotonous and slow, but without being especially ridiculous. On the whole, Lucien might have imagined himself in a house of elderly people of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Madame de Commercy did not raise her voice inordinately, her gestures were not exaggerated like those of the young people of good society whom Lucien noticed on the street. "She is a relic of the polite age," he said to himself.

Madame de Commercy noticed with pleasure that Lucien frequently turned an admiring glance toward her garden. She told him that her son, who had lived for twelve years in succession at Hartwell (the house of Louis XVIII in England), had had this exact copy made of the gardens, on a smaller scale of course, as befitted a private individual. Madame de Commercy invited him to come and walk in her garden whenever he liked.

"Several persons come to stroll there without thinking themselves obliged to see the aged proprietress. The concierge has a list of all the strollers."



Lucien was touched by this attention and as he was a well-bred soul, only too well-bred, his reply fully expressed his gratitude. After this invitation, offered with such simplicity, there was no further question of mockery. He felt himself a new man. For several months Lucien had been deprived of polite society.

When he rose to take his leave, Madame de Commercy was able to remark without departing from the general tone of the conversation:

"I must admit, sir, this is the first time that the cockade you wear has been seen in this drawing room, but I hope you will bring it again, and often. It will always be a pleasure to receive a man with such distinguished manners and who, although still in his early youth, is so right-thinking."

"And all this for having gone to the Penitents!" he thought. To relieve his pent-up merriment, he could hardly resist a mad impulse to distribute five-franc pieces to all the lackeys lined up in a row in the ante-chamber as he went out.

And he discovered his own duty in this row of lackeys. "For a man who begins to be as right-thinking as I, it is a grave inconsistency to have only one servant." He asked M. Du Poirier to find him three trustworthy fellows and particularly ones who *thought right*.

Returning home, Lucien was a little like King Midas' barber. He was dying for someone to whom he could relate his good fortune. He wrote eight or ten pages to his mother requesting her to send handsome liveries for five or six domestics. "My father will be convinced, when he pays for them, that I am not yet a very pure Saint-Simonian."

A few days later, Madame de Commercy invited Lucien to dinner. Already assembled in the drawing room, where he had been careful to arrive precisely at half-past three, he found Madame de Serpierre with only one of her six daughters, M. Du Poirier, and two or three ancient ladies with their hus-

bands who were, for the most part, *Chevaliers de Saint Louis*. They were evidently waiting for someone else. Soon a lackey announced, *Monsieur and Madame de Sauve-d'Hocquincourt*. Lucien was impressed: "It would certainly be impossible to find a prettier woman anywhere. And for once rumor has not lied." In her eyes was a warmth, a gaiety, a naturalness that made it a joy just to look at them. On second glance he found one fault in this charming young woman. Although hardly twenty-five or -six, she already showed a tendency to plumpness. A tall blond young man with drooping mustaches, very pale and with a haughty, taciturn air, walked beside her. This was her husband. Her lover, M. d'Antin, had come with them. At table Lucien was placed on her right; she frequently turned to him, said something in a low voice, and laughed. "Such a frank gay laugh!" thought Lucien. "What a strange contrast to the morose and antiquated bearing of the rest of the company. In Paris we would say that it was a somewhat daring gaiety. What enemies she must make, this pretty woman! Even the most indulgent might well blame her for exposing herself to the terrible disadvantages of calumny for lack of a little restraint. The provinces offer certain compensations, after all! In the midst of all these faces born for boredom, the important thing is that the *leading lady* should be attractive, and, by gad, this one is really charming. For such a dinner I would be willing to go to the Penitents a dozen times over."

Being a prudent man, Lucien made every effort to be agreeable to M. de Sauve-d'Hocquincourt, who insisted on always using his two names, both being illustrious, the first under Charles IX and the second under Louis XIV.

While listening to the slow, elegant and colorless discourse of M. d'Hocquincourt, Lucien examined his wife. She might have been twenty-four or twenty-five years old. She was blond, with very large blue eyes full of a charming vivacity. They

were never languishing, only a little absent at times when anyone bored her, but a second later, struck by some original or amusing idea, they would again sparkle with the maddest gaiety. Her deliciously fresh mouth, delicately traced and clearly designed, gave an air of nobility to the whole head. A slightly aquiline nose completed the charm of this aristocratic countenance which was as changing as her changing fancies. In Paris Madame d'Hocquincourt would have passed for a beauty of the first rank; in Nancy people barely admitted that she was pretty.

By the end of dinner Lucien had a feeling of positive benevolence toward the Marquis d'Antin and his lovely mistress. When coffee was served, Du Poirier had the opportunity of replying discreetly to Lucien's numerous questions about Madame d'Hocquincourt.

"She sincerely adores her lover and commits the greatest follies for him. Her misfortune, or rather her greatest distinction, is that after two or three years of admiring a lover she begins to find certain things about him ludicrous. Soon he inspires a mortal boredom that nothing can cure. Then it's worth the price of admission to see how her kindness is tortured by her boredom, for she has the kindest heart in the world and cannot bear to be the cause of real suffering. What is really comical, (I'll tell you all the details another time), is that her last lover fell madly, tragically, in love with her at the very moment when he was beginning to bore her. She was terribly unhappy and for six months could not decide how to get rid of him with humanity. I saw the time approaching when she would come to me for a consultation on the subject. At such moments she is infinitely witty."

"And how long has M. d'Antin lasted?" asked Lucien with a candor that repaid the doctor for all his trouble.

"For thirty months. Everybody is astonished. But he has a temperament as mad as hers, and that holds her."

"And the husband? I have observed that bourgeois husbands are devilishly suspicious in this city."

"But have you only just begun to notice," asked Du Poirier with a comically ingenuous air, "that only among the aristocracy is there any gaiety and *savoir-vivre* left? Madame d'Hocquincourt has made her husband so madly in love with her that he cannot be jealous. It is she who opens all the anonymous letters sent to him. As for him, he is sincerely preparing himself for martyrdom."

"What martyrdom?"

"Another '93, which is a certainty should Louis-Philippe fall."

"And you think he is going to be overthrown! That is too amusing."

The future martyr had been a captain of grenadiers in Charles X's bodyguard, and had shown much valor in Spain and elsewhere. Those pale cheeks took on a little color only when the subject of the antiquity of his house came up, allied, it is true, to the Vaudemont, the Chatellux and the Lillebonne families and all that was noblest in the provinces. Lucien discovered that this brave man entertained a strange illusion. He imagined that his name was known in Paris, and by a sort of instinctive jealousy fell into a terrible rage when he heard of people making names for themselves through their writing. Béranger had just been mentioned, and was cited as a powerful devil who had brought about the fall of Charles X.

"He must be very proud of that," someone said.

"Not as proud, I should imagine," M. d'Hocquincourt energetically retorted, "as if his ancestors had followed Saint-Louis to the crusades."

This dialogue delighted Lucien, who had the double pleasure of learning interesting facts while not being in the least deceived by the speakers; he was brusquely interrupted. Madame de Commerce summoned him to present him to Madame de

Serpierre, a tall, spare woman, extremely devout, who had a rather limited fortune and six marriageable daughters. The one sitting beside her had hair of an incredibly daring red, was very nearly five feet five inches tall, and wore a voluminous white dress with a green sash six inches wide which emphasized her thin flat figure to perfection. This green on white seemed frightfully ugly to Lucien. It was not on account of politics that Lucien was shocked by the bad taste he had found in *foreign parts*.

"Are the other five sisters as seductive as this one?" he asked when he had returned to the doctor.

All at once the doctor assumed an air of profound gravity. His expression changed as if by command, to the great amusement of the second-lieutenant, who chanted to himself with the accentuation of a military command, "*Rascal be—grave!*"

Meanwhile, Du Poirier spoke at length of the high lineage and equally lofty virtue of these young ladies, facts which Lucien never dreamed of disputing. After a lot of pompous phrases, the wily doctor reached the point of his discourse:

"What is the use of speaking ill of women who are not pretty?"

"Ah! I've caught you, Doctor! A most indiscreet speech. *You* are the one who says that Mademoiselle de Serpierre is not pretty, and I shall be able to quote you!" Then, with a profound and serious air, he added:

"If I wished to lie all the time and about everything, I should go to dine with cabinet ministers. They at least have positions or money to distribute. But I have plenty of money and no ambition for any position but the one I hold. Why open one's mouth if it is only to lie. Especially buried here in the provinces, and at a dinner where there is only one pretty woman! That is really too heroic for your humble servant."

After this sally our hero proceeded to follow the doctor's hint. He paid assiduous court to Madame de Serpierre and

her daughter, and abandoned in the most marked fashion the brilliant Madame d'Hocquincourt.

In spite of her unfortunate hair, Mademoiselle de Serpierre turned out to be simple, intelligent, and not even malicious, which was a great surprise to Lucien. After a half-hour's conversation with mother and daughter, he left them with regret to follow the advice that Madame de Serpierre had just given him. He went to ask Madame de Commercy to introduce him to the other aged ladies in the drawing room. During the tiresome conversations that followed he glanced over at Mademoiselle de Serpierre on the other side of the room, and found her infinitely less shocking. "So much the better," he thought, "my role will be less painful. It is all right to laugh at the doctor, but I must obey him. Only by courting the old, the ugly, and the ridiculous can I make my way through this inferno. To talk with Madame d'Hocquincourt as much as I should like is, alas, too much for a stranger to expect in this society, a stranger, moreover, who is not noble. The reception accorded me is astonishingly gracious. I wonder what plot is concealed beneath." Madame de Serpierre was so edified by the politeness of this second-lieutenant who soon came over to sit beside her "Boston" table, that instead of finding he had a "Jacobin and July-hero air" (her first comment about him) she declared that his manners were most distinguished.

"What is his name exactly?" she asked Madame de Commercy, and seemed profoundly grieved when the reply gave her the fatal assurance that it was irremediably bourgeois.

"Why didn't he take the name of the village where he was born, as they all do? It is a civility they really should observe if they want to be tolerated in polite society."

This remark was addressed to Théodelinde de Serpierre who, kindhearted as she was, had suffered all during dinner over Lucien's embarrassment at not being able to use his right arm.

A lady of some importance coming in just then, Madame de Serpierre told Lucien that she intended to introduce him and, without waiting for his reply, began to explain the antiquity of the house of Furonière, to which this lady belonged, loud enough so that the lady could hear everything being said about her.

"This is really farcical," thought Lucien, "addressed to me who am patently not noble, whom she has met for the first time, and to whom she wishes to be obliging! In Paris we would call it tactlessness. In the provinces people are more natural."

Hardly had the presentation to Madame Furonière taken place than Madame de Commercy called Lucien to introduce him to still another lady who had just arrived. "One more call to pay," Lucien thought to himself after each presentation. "I must write down all these names, together with a few historic and heraldic details, otherwise I shall forget them and commit some shocking blunder. The foundation of my conversation when talking with these new acquaintances will be requests for further details on their noble rank."

The very next day, in his tilbury, followed by two lackeys on horseback, Lucien went to leave cards on the ladies to whom he had had the honor of being presented the previous evening. To his great astonishment he was received almost everywhere, everyone being curious to have a closer view of him; and all these ladies who knew about his great fortune were full of solicitude for his wounded arm. His behavior was perfect, but he was worn out when he arrived at Madame de Serpierre's. He consoled himself with the thought that he would find Mademoiselle Théodelinde, the tall girl of the evening before whom he had at first thought so ugly.

A lackey dressed in a light green livery six inches too long, showed him into a perfectly immense drawing room pleasantly enough furnished, but badly lighted. The whole family

rose as he entered. "That comes from their gesticulating mania," he thought. And although respectably tall himself, he found himself almost the shortest person in the company. "Now I understand the enormous size of the drawing room. Such a family could never have fitted into an ordinary apartment."

The father, an old gentleman with white hair, startled Lucien. He was the exact replica, in clothes and manners, of a provincial actor in the role of the *noble father*. He wore the cross of Saint-Louis hung on a very long ribbon with a wide white border, indicating, no doubt, the order of the Lily. He spoke very well and with a kind of grace suitable to a gentleman of seventy. Everything was going wonderfully until, speaking of his past, M. de Serpierre told Lucien that he had been King's Lieutenant at Colmar.

At the word Colmar, Lucien was seized with a feeling of horror which his candid and expressive face must have unconsciously betrayed, for the old officer hastened to make it clear in the most honorable way and not in the least offended, that he had been absent from Colmar at the time of the Colonel Caron affair.

This keen emotion made Lucien forget all his plans. He had come disposed to make fun of the sisters with their red hair and grenadier stature, of this mother with such an amiable disposition, always angry, always criticizing, bent on marrying off all her daughters.

The old officer's gallant attitude toward the Colmar affair sanctified the whole household. From that moment there was nothing ridiculous about them in his eyes.

My benevolent reader is asked to remember that our hero is young; very ingenuous, and without the least experience. All this, however, cannot prevent our feeling a painful sensation in being forced to acknowledge that he still had the extraordinary weakness to get indignant over political mat-



ters. At that period he was a naïve soul with no knowledge of himself. He was by no means one of those strong-minded individuals of superior intelligence who judge everything in the most categorical fashion. In his mother's drawing room, where people made fun of everything, he had learned to laugh at hypocrisy and to detect it pretty well. But he had no conception of himself or what he would one day become.

When he was fifteen, and had just begun to read the newspapers, the disgraceful trap set for Colonel Caron, which resulted in his death, was the last important act of the government of that day. It had served as a text for all the newspapers of the opposition. This famous piece of knavery was moreover perfectly intelligible to a boy; with all the details in his possession it was like a geometric demonstration.

Having recovered from the emotion caused by the mention of Colmar, Lucien looked at M. de Serpierre with interest. He was a handsome old gentleman about five feet nine inches tall with an erect carriage and beautiful white hair that gave him an altogether patriarchal air. In the bosom of his family he wore an ancient royal-blue costume with a straight collar and a very military cut. "Apparently in order to wear it out," thought Lucien. This seemed to him very touching, accustomed as he was to the vain, coquettish old gentlemen of Paris. The absence of all affectation, and above all the wisdom of his conversation well provided with facts, completed Lucien's conquest. The absence of affectation seemed to Lucien especially incredible in the provinces.

During the greater part of his visit, Lucien paid much more attention to this brave soldier who related at length all the campaigns of the *émigration*, and all the injustices of the Austrian generals who tried to find ways of humiliating the corps of *émigrés*, than to the six great girls who surrounded him. "I must really," he thought finally, "pay some attention to

them." All the young ladies were sitting with their needlework around a single lamp, for oil was very high that year.

They spoke in a natural manner. "It is as though they are asking to be forgiven for not being pretty."

They never raised their voices; they never coyly bent their heads at an interesting point in their conversation; they did not seem to be constantly thinking of the effect they were making on the company; they did not give endless details on the rarity or the manufacture of the stuff of which their gowns were made; they did not call a painting a *great page in history*, etc., etc. In short, if it hadn't been for the hard and malicious face of Madame de Serpierre, their mother, Lucien would have been completely happy and uncritical that evening. As a matter of fact, he succeeded in quite forgetting her remarks and found real pleasure in conversing with Mademoiselle Théodelinde.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

**D**URING THIS CALL, which should have lasted twenty minutes and which lasted two hours, the only disagreeable remarks Lucien heard spoken were a few spiteful words from Madame de Serpierre. This lady had prominent features, imposing but lifeless. Her large eyes, dull and expressionless, followed every move Lucien made and chilled him to the bone. "God, what a creature!" he said to himself.

From time to time, out of politeness, Lucien deserted the circle around the lamp composed of the de Serpierre young ladies, to chat with the former lieutenant to the King. The latter liked to explain that France would never again know

peace and tranquillity until the exact conditions of 1786 had been restored.

"That was the beginning of our decadence," the good old gentleman repeated several times. "*Inde mali labes.*"

Nothing could have been more absurd in Lucien's eyes, for he believed that it was precisely since 1786 that France had begun to rise from the state of barbarism in which it was still partly submerged.

Four or five young men, aristocrats without a doubt, appeared in the drawing room one after the other. Lucien noticed them taking poses. They would lean one elbow elegantly on the black marble mantelpiece, or on a gilded console between the windows. Whenever they abandoned one of these graceful poses for another equally graceful, they did it with such quick, violent movements one would have thought they were obeying a military command.

Lucien was thinking: "All this is perhaps necessary in order to impress provincial young ladies," when he was roused from his philosophical meditations by a dawning realization that these fine young gentlemen with their affected poses were endeavoring to make him feel the great distance that existed between himself and them, whereupon he tried to make it equally plain that he returned their sentiments a hundredfold.

"Are you, by chance, offended?" asked Mademoiselle Théodelinde, coming up to him.

There was such simplicity and good nature in this question that Lucien replied with the same candor:

"So little offended that I shall ask you to tell me the names of these pretty gentlemen who, if I am not mistaken, are most anxious to make an impression on you. It is, therefore, to your lovely eyes that I owe the marks of aversion with which they honor me at this moment."

"That young man talking to my mother is M. de Lanfort."

"He is very handsome, and that one over there looks civi-

lized. But who is the gentleman leaning on the mantelpiece with such a ferocious air?"

"That is M. Ludwig Roller, former cavalry officer. The two next to him are his brothers, also officers who resigned after the revolution of 1830. They have no fortune of their own and were entirely dependent on their army pay. Now they have only one horse for the three of them and their conversation suffers in consequence. They can no longer talk of what you military men call equipment, the weight of cloth and plate and other amusing things. They have no longer any hope of becoming marshals of France, like Marshal de Larnac who was the great-great-grandfather of their grandmother."

"Your description makes them altogether charming. And that fat fellow, the short stocky one, who looks at me now and then with such disdain, blowing out his cheeks like a wild boar?"

"What! You don't know who that is? He is the Marquis de Sanréal, the richest man in the province."

The conversation between Lucien and Mademoiselle Théodelinde was to all appearances very lively; for that very good reason it was interrupted by M. de Sanréal who, annoyed by Lucien's happy air, came over and spoke to Mademoiselle Théodelinde almost in a whisper, without paying the slightest attention to our second-lieutenant.

In the provinces everything is permitted to a rich and unmarried man.

Suddenly Lucien was reminded of the proprieties by this act of semi-hostility. The antique clock hanging on the wall, almost eight feet from the ground, had a pewter face so ornately decorated that it was impossible to make out either the hours or the hands. It struck, and Lucien was amazed to discover that he had been at the de Serpierre's for two whole hours. He left.

"Now we shall see whether I have those aristocratic prej-

udices my father is always teasing me about." He went to Madame Berchu's. There he found the Prefect just finishing a game of Boston.

As soon as M. Berchu saw Lucien he said to his wife, an enormous creature of fifty or sixty years of age:

"My little one, aren't you going to offer M. Leuwen a cup of tea?"

And as Madame Berchu did not hear him, M. Berchu repeated "my little one" several times.

"Is it my fault," thought Lucien, "if these people always make me want to laugh?" When he had finished his cup of tea he went over to admire the really very pretty dress Mademoiselle Sylviane was wearing that evening. It was made of some Algerian stuff with very wide stripes of chestnut and pale yellow. In the light, these colors had a most pleasing effect.

The lovely Sylviane responded to Lucien's admiration by recounting in great detail the history of this remarkable dress: it came from Algiers, it had been in Mademoiselle Sylviane's wardrobe a very long time, etc., etc. The lovely Sylviane, oblivious of her rather colossal girth, was careful to bend and to twist and to turn as she pointed out all the most interesting details of this touching history. "Ah, the lovely curves," thought Lucien, trying to be patient. Mademoiselle Berchu could undoubtedly have posed for one of those Goddesses of Reason of 1793, which had just been the subject of M. de Serpierre's long discourse. Mademoiselle Sylviane would have indeed been proud to be carried on a platform by eight or ten stalwart men through the streets of the city.

The history of the dress finished, Lucien no longer felt any desire to talk. He listened to the Prefect reciting an article from the *Débats* with ponderous fatuity. "These people never converse, they lecture," thought Lucien. "If I sit down I shall go to sleep. I must fly while I still have the strength." He looked

at his watch in the ante-chamber. He had stayed barely twenty minutes at Madame Berchu's.

So as not to forget his new acquaintances, and, especially, so as not to get them mixed up, which would have been disastrous considering the susceptibility of provincial pride, Lucien took the precaution of drawing up a list of his friends of recent date. He arranged them according to rank like the lists the English papers always publish of the Almack Balls. Here is the list:

"Madame la Comtesse de Commercy, House of Lorraine.

"M. le Marquis and Madame la Marquise de Puylaurens.

"M. de Lanfort, quotes Voltaire and repeats all Du Poirier's arguments on the Civil Code and on partition.

"M. le Marquis and Madame la Marquise de Sauve-d'Hocquin-court; M. d'Antin, Madame's lover. The Marquis a brave man dying of fright.

"The Marquis de Sanréal, short, fat, unbelievably fatuous, and an income of a hundred thousand pounds.

"The Marquis de Pontlevé and his daughter, Madame de Chasteller, the best 'catch' in the province, millions, and the object of the desires of MM. de Blancet, de Goëlle, etc., etc. Warned that Madame de Chasteller would never receive me on account of my cockade; should have to go in civilian clothes.

"The Comtesse de Marcilly, widow of a *cordons rouge*; great grandfather, a marshal of France.

"The three Comtes Roller: Ludwig, Sigismond, and André, brave officers, inveterate horsemen, and very discontented. The three brothers always say exactly the same thing. Ludwig has a ferocious air and looks at me with disapproval and a jaundiced eye.

"The Comte de Vassigny, former lieutenant-colonel, a man of intelligence and wit; try to get better acquainted. Furnishings in good taste, valets well groomed.

"People whom I know but with whom conversation must be avoided, for one conversation leads to a dozen more and they talk like yesterday's newspaper: M. and Madame de Louvalle; Madame de Saint Cyran; M. de Bernheim; MM. de Jaurey, de Vaupoil, de Serdan, de Pouly, de Saint-Vincent, de Pelletier-Luzy, de Vinaert, de Charlemont."

Lucien was such a novice that he was surprised neither by the excellent reception which this noble society of Nancy had accorded him (with the exception of the young men), nor by the doctor's assiduity in cultivating his company and in acting as his patron.

In spite of his passionate eloquence and insolence, Du Poirier was a singularly timid man. He had never been to Paris and life there assumed monstrous proportions in his imagination. He was, however, dying to visit it. His correspondents had long ago told him all sorts of things about M. Leuwen Senior. "In the Leuwen house," the doctor said to himself, "I should find an excellent dinner gratis, influential men with whom I could converse and who, in case of any mishap, would protect me. Thanks to the Leuwens I should not be completely alone in that Babylon. This young fellow writes everything to his parents; they must know already that I am his patron here."

Mesdames de Marcilly and de Commercy, both of them well over sixty, by whom Lucien had the wit to allow himself to be invited frequently to dinner, had introduced him to all Nancy. Lucien followed to the letter the advice that Mademoiselle Théodelinde had given him.

He had not spent a week in this élite society before he observed that it was torn by violent schisms.

At first, terribly ashamed of this disunion, they tried to hide it from a stranger. But animosity and passion were too strong for them. For there is one good thing that can be said for the provinces: *passion still exists there.*

M. de Vassigny, and all reasonable people, believed that they were living under the reign of Henri V, while Sanréal, Ludwig Roller and all the most fanatical, refused to accept the abdications at Rambouillet, and looked forward to the reign of Louis XIX after that of Charles X.

Lucien went often to what was called the Hôtel Puylaurens. It was a big house situated at the extremity of a faubourg occupied by tanners, and in the neighborhood of a very odoriferous river about twelve feet wide.

Above a row of little square windows, that lighted the carriage houses and stables, could be seen a long line of large windows surmounted by little tile roofs. These little roofs were there to serve as protection for the Bohemian glass windowpanes. Thus shielded from the rain for the last twenty years, they had never been washed and suffused the interior with a dim, yellowish light.

In this gloomiest of apartments lighted by these dusty windowpanes, might be seen, seated at an ancient Boule desk, a tall, lean man still wearing, for the sake of his political principles, powder and queue, although he would often frankly admit that short hair without powder was far more comfortable. This martyr to principle was very old and was called the Marquis de Puylaurens. During the emigration he had been the faithful companion of an august personage. Later that personage, when he became all-powerful, had been very much criticized for not having done anything for a man whom his courtiers called a *friend of thirty years' standing*. Finally, after many solicitations, which M. de Puylaurens often found extremely humiliating, he was named Collector-General at —.

Ever since those days of distasteful soliciting that had finally led to *financial* employment, M. de Puylaurens, bitter against the family to whom he had consecrated his life, saw everything in a somber light. But his principles had remained pure, and he would have sacrificed his life for them. "It is not," he would



often repeat, "because he is an amiable man that Charles X is our king. Amiable or not he is the son of the Dauphin who was the son of Louis XV. That suffices." And in intimate gatherings he would add: "Is it the fault of legitimacy that the legitimate heir is an imbecile? Would my farmer be excused from his obligation to pay me the rent of his farm because I am ungrateful and a fool?" M. de Puylaurens loathed Louis XVIII: "That *enormous* egoist has given a sort of legitimacy to the Revolution. Because of him, revolt has a plausible excuse, ridiculous for us, but which can easily mislead the weak."

"Yes, my dear sir," he said to Lucien the day after the latter had been presented, "the crown is a freehold property and possession, nothing that the actual holder may do can bind his successor, not even a vow, for that vow was made at a time when he was a subject and could refuse nothing to his King."

Lucien listened to all this and much more with a very attentive, and even respectful air as became a young man, but he took care that his courteous air should not be mistaken for agreement. "As a plebeian and a liberal, I can only amount to something in the midst of all this vanity through opposition."

Du Poirier, when present, would unceremoniously break into the Marquis' discourse. "The result of so many fine things," he would say, "is that they will succeed in distributing the property of a commune equally among all the inhabitants. While waiting for this final goal of the *liberals*, the Civil Code undertakes to turn *our* children into little bourgeois. What noble fortune could withstand such a constant partition at the death of the head of every house? And that is not all. For our younger sons there was always the army; but as the Civil Code, which should be called the Infernal Code, preaches equality of fortunes, conscription brings with it the principle of equality in the army. Promotion is flatly governed by a law; nothing

depends on the King's favor; and so, why please the King? Well, sir, from the moment one can ask that question monarchy no longer exists. Looking at it from another angle, what do I see? The absence of great hereditary fortunes—again, no monarchy! The only thing that is left us is a religious peasantry; for without religion, no more respect for men of wealth and noble birth, nothing but an infernal spirit of criticism; instead of respect, envy, and, at the slightest so-called injustice, revolt." Then the Marquis de Puylaurens would take up the refrain: "We have, therefore, no other resource than the recall of the Jesuits, to whom for the next forty years should be entrusted the dictatorship of education."

The most amusing thing was that in sustaining these opinions, the Marquis proclaimed himself, and believed himself to be, a patriot. In that he was far inferior to the old rascal Du Poirier who, as they were leaving M. de Puylaurens one day, said to Lucien:

"It is not for a man who has been born a duke, a millionaire, a peer of France to inquire whether his position is in accordance with virtue, the general good, and a lot of other fine things. His position is a good one; therefore he should do everything possible to maintain and to improve it; otherwise he is despised as a coward and a fool."

To listen to such discourses with an attentive and courteous air, never to yawn no matter how long and eloquent the development might be, such was Lucien's duty *sine qua non*, such was the price he had to pay for the extreme grace granted him by Nancy's aristocratic society in taking him to its bosom. "It must be admitted," he said to himself one evening as he returned home ready to fall asleep in the street, "it must be admitted that people a hundred times more noble than I am deign to address me in the most flattering and the most noble fashion, but they also overwhelm me with boredom. I cannot stand it any longer. True, when I get home I can go up to

my landlord, to M. Bouchard's on the third floor where I am very apt to find his nephew Gauthier. He is a man of unequaled honesty, who will immediately hurl the most incontestable truths at me, but about things that are not in the least amusing, and in a manner whose simplicity approaches crudity when he gets excited. But why should that worry me? Except that they make me yawn.

"Am I doomed then to spend my life between mad, selfish, and polite legitimists in love with the past, and mad, generous, and boring republicans in love with the future? Now I can understand my father's saying: 'Oh, why wasn't I born in 1710 with an income of fifty thousand pounds!'"

The fine arguments which Lucien endured every evening in society and which the reader has only had to endure once, were the profession of faith of all among the nobility of Nancy, and the province rose little above the level of innocently repeating the articles in the *Quotidienne* and the *Gazette de France*. After one month of patience, Lucien began to find really unbearable this society of noble landed proprietors who talked as though they were the only people in the world, and of nothing but politics and the price of oats.

There was only one exception to this general boredom. Lucien was altogether delighted when, arriving at the Hôtel de Puylaurens, he found the Marquise at home. She was a tall woman of thirty-four or -five, or even more, who had superb eyes and a dazzling skin and, in addition, always seemed to be laughing at the whole world. She could tell a story to perfection and tossed off her ironies lavishly, without the least regard to parties. She almost invariably hit the nail on the head and there was laughter in any group where she was to be found. Lucien would willingly have fallen in love with her but the place was already taken, and Madame de Puylaurens' chief occupation was teasing the amiable young man called M. de Lanfort. Her pleasantries were in a tone of the

tenderest intimacy, but no one was shocked. "Another advantage the provinces enjoy," thought Lucien. Moreover, he liked M. de Lanfort; he was one of the *natives* who did not shout.

Lucien became very much attached to the Marquise and at the end of two weeks she seemed to him pretty. There was a provoking mixture in her of provincial enthusiasm and Parisian urbanity. She had indeed completed her education at the court of Charles X while her husband was Collector-General in a remote department.

To please her husband and her Party, Madame de Puylaurens went to church two or three times a day; but the moment she set foot in the temple of our Lord it became a salon. Lucien would place his chair as near to Madame de Puylaurens as he could, thus discovering the secret of obeying the mandates of polite society with the least possible boredom.

One day when the Marquise and her friends had been laughing rather too noisily, a priest came over to her and ventured to remonstrate.

"It would seem, Madame la Marquise, that in God's house . . ."

"Is it to me, by chance, that this *Madame* is addressed? But really, my dear Abbé, you are too comical! Your function is to save souls and, considering your eloquence, if we didn't come here for the sake of our principles, you wouldn't have a soul here to save. Talk all you please in your pulpit; but kindly remember that your duty is to answer and not to ask questions. Your father, who was one of my lackeys, should have taught you better."

A burst of laughter, though more or less stifled, greeted this charitable advice. It was all quite amusing and Lucien did not miss the least shade of the little scene. But, to make up for it, he was obliged to listen to the account of it repeated a hundred times at least.

A serious quarrel arose between Madame de Puylaurens and

M. de Lanfort, and Lucien redoubled his assiduities. Nothing could have been more entertaining than the clashes between the two belligerent parties who continued to see each other every day; their behavior toward each other became the topic of the day.

Lucien often left the Hôtel de Puylaurens in the company of M. de Lanfort, and a certain intimacy sprang up between them. M. de Lanfort, who was fortunate enough to be well-born, was also without regrets. At the time of the revolution of 1830 he had been captain of cavalry, and was only too delighted to have an excuse for quitting a profession that bored him.

One morning, leaving the Hôtel de Puylaurens where he had been shockingly and publicly ill-treated, he said to Lucien:

"Nothing could induce me to put myself in the position of having to slaughter weavers and tanners which, as things are today, is your occupation."

"It must be admitted that the service since Napoleon doesn't amount to much," Lucien rejoined. "Under Charles X you were forced to be spies as at Colmar in the Caron affair, or as in Spain to take General Riego by treachery and let him be captured and killed by King Ferdinand. Such heroic deeds, I acknowledge, are neither to your taste nor mine."

"We should have lived under Louis XIV.," de Lanfort conceded. "Then one spent one's life at court in the best society in the world, with Madame de Sévigné, M. le Duc de Villeroy, M. le Duc de Saint-Simon, and had nothing to do with soldiers, except to lead them to battle and win all the glory if there was any."

"That is all very well for you, M. le Marquis, but under Louis XIV I should have been nothing but a merchant, or at best a miniature Samuel Bernard."

At this point, much to their regret, Sanréal accosted them,

and the conversation took quite a different turn. They talked about the dry weather that would ruin all the landowners whose fields were not irrigated; they hotly discussed the necessity of an irrigation canal that would have its source in the Baccarat woods.

Lucien entertained himself by making a detailed examination of Sanréal. He was the prototype of the great provincial landed proprietor. He was a short man of thirty-three, with dirty black hair and a thick girth. He had all sorts of affectations and above all that of being good natured and unassuming, but without, for all that, disclaiming pretensions to subtlety and wit. This mixture of opposite pretensions, set off by a fortune which for the provinces was enormous, and a corresponding conceit, made of him a most extraordinary jackass. He was not exactly devoid of ideas, but so vain and conceited that one itched to toss him out of the window, especially when he was bent on being witty.

When he took your hand, one of his amiable pleasantries was to squeeze it until you cried out. He himself always shouted at the top of his lungs when he had nothing to say. He exaggerated all the marks of simplicity and good nature, and you could see that he said to himself a hundred times a day: "I am the greatest landed proprietor in the province and, in consequence, I ought to be different."

If some common carrier happened to have an altercation with one of his servants, he would immediately rush up to settle the quarrel and would have killed the carrier without compunction. His greatest title to glory, placing him at the head of all energetic and right-thinking men of the province, was to have arrested personally, in the midst of a great crowd, a wretched peasant, one of the many who were shot without knowing why by order of the Bourbons after the conspiracies, or rather the riots, which broke out during their reign. Lucien only learned this detail at a later date. Sanréal's own

party was ashamed of him, and he himself, amazed at what he had done, began to wonder whether a gentleman, a great landed proprietor, should really have undertaken the office of a policeman, and worse still, have picked a wretched peasant out of a crowd to have him shot, practically without a trial, and after a simple appearance before a military commission.

The Marquis, and in this alone he resembled all the amiable marquises of the Regency, was almost completely drunk every day after one or two o'clock; and it was two o'clock when he accosted M. de Lanfort. At such times he talked without stopping and was the hero of all his stories. "He is not without energy, this man," thought Lucien, "and will never stick out his neck for the axe of another '93 like those devout sheep, the d'Hocquincourts."

The Marquis kept open house morning and evening, and when talking politics never descended from the heights of emphatic pomposity, and for a very good reason: he knew by heart twenty or more of M. de Chateaubriand's sayings, among others the one about needing only a hangman and six other persons to run a department.

To be able to sustain such a degree of eloquence, he always kept on a little mahogany table beside his armchair a bottle of cognac, a few letters from the other side of the Rhine, and a copy of *France*, the paper that contests the abdications of Rambouillet in 1830. No one entered Sanréal's house without drinking the King's health and that of his legitimate heir, Louis XIX.

"Gad, sir," said Sanréal, turning to Lucien, "perhaps one of these days we'll strike a blow together, if ever the great legitimists of Paris have the wit to shake off the yoke of the lawyers."

Lucien's reply had the good fortune of pleasing the Marquis who was already half drunk, and from that morning, which ended with a spiced wine at an *ultra* café of the city, Sanréal became altogether reconciled to Lucien.

But this heroic Marquis had his drawbacks. He could never hear the name of Louis-Philippe pronounced without shouting: *Robber!* in an odd, screeching tone. This was his great witticism which invariably caused all the noble ladies of Nancy to burst into fits of uncontrollable laughter, not once but ten times of an evening. Lucien was shocked by this eternal repetition and eternal mirth.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

AFTER OBSERVING for the sixtieth or eightieth time the electrifying effect of this ingenious witticism, Lucien said to himself: "I should be a simpleton to tell these country clowns what I really think; everything about them, even their laughter, is an affectation; even in their lightest moments they are still thinking of '93!"

This observation decided the success of our hero. A few rather too sincere remarks had already tempered the infatuation which he had begun to inspire. The moment he began lying like a singing cicada to all comers, the infatuation began again and stronger than ever. But with spontaneity, all pleasure also vanished. And, by some sad law of compensation, with prudence, boredom returned. At the sight of any of Madame de Commercy's noble friends he knew by heart exactly what he must say to them, and what their replies would be. The most agreeable of these gentlemen had not more than eight or ten jokes at his disposal, and one can judge of their sense of humor by the Marquis de Sanréal's standing witticism, which was considered one of the brightest.

Moreover, boredom is such an irksome thing, even in the provinces, even to the people given to distributing it abundantly.



dantly, that these vain gentlemen of Nancy, nothing loath to talk to Lucien, would stop him on the street. This bourgeois, who was right-thinking enough despite his father's millions, was a novelty. And in addition, Madame de Puylaurens, the arbiter of wit, had pronounced him witty. That was Lucien's first success. As a matter of fact, he was a little less green than on his departure from Paris.

Among the persons who had adopted Lucien, the one he preferred above any of the others was unquestionably the colonel, Count de Vassigny. Tall and blond and already quite wrinkled although still young, he had an intelligent instead of a haughty air. He had been wounded in July 1830 and yet never took advantage of this immense superiority. When he returned to Nancy he had the misfortune of inspiring a mad passion in little Madame de Ville-Belle. She was full of borrowed wit and had very beautiful eyes in which shone an unpleasant and ill-bred ardor. She dominated M. de Vassigny, annoyed him, prevented him from going to Paris which he was dying to see again, and insisted on his making an intimate friend of Lucien. M. de Vassigny would often come to Lucien's rooms. "This is too much," thought Lucien. "And what is there left me in this hole if I can't even enjoy privacy at home?" Lucien ended by noticing that, having sufficiently and expertly *sweetened* him with compliments and flattery, the count would begin plying him with questions. To get some fun out of the visits, Lucien would try answering in "Norman," since for these provincials, time apparently stood still and a call of two hours was nothing to them.

"What is the depth of the dry moat between the Palace of the Tuileries and the garden?" Count de Vassigny asked Lucien one day.

"I don't know," replied Lucien. "But it would, I judge, be difficult to cross with weapons in hand."

"Approximately, is it twelve or fifteen feet deep? But then the water from the Seine would seep into it."

"Ah, now that I think of it, I seem to remember that the bottom is always wet. However, it may only be three or four feet deep. I really never thought of investigating it, yet I have heard that moat spoken of as a military defense."

And for twenty minutes Lucien amused himself with these ambiguous replies.

One day, Lucien noticed that Madame d'Hocquincourt was getting terribly annoyed with M. d'Antin. This charming young man, so French, so heedless of the future, so ready to please, so inclined to gaiety, was on this particular day quite beside himself with love and dreamy tenderness. He had so far lost his head as to try to make himself more agreeable than usual. Instead of taking Madame d'Hocquincourt's polite hints that he should go for a walk and come back later, he did nothing but pace up and down the drawing room.

"Madam," said Lucien, "I should like very much to offer you a little English engraving in an adorable Gothic frame. I shall ask your permission to hang it in your drawing room, and the day I no longer see it in its place, to show you how bitterly I resent such a dastardly act, I shall never set foot in your house again."

"Now that's what I like, a man with some sense of humor!" cried Madame d'Hocquincourt, laughing. "You, at least, are not stupid enough to fall in love. . . . Great God! Is there anything under heaven more boring than love? . . ."

But such moments were rare for our poor Lucien, and once more his life became very dull and very monotonous. He had succeeded in breaking into the drawing rooms of Nancy, he had servants in attractive liveries, his dashing tilbury and calash could compare favorably by their newness with any of the equipages of M. de Sanréal and the other wealthy landed proprietors of the country, and he had had the satisfaction of

being able to tell his father all the gossip of the first families of Nancy. In spite of all this he was quite as bored as when he spent his evenings wandering alone through the streets of Nancy when he didn't know a soul.

Often when he was on the point of entering one of the aristocratic homes, he would stop short in the street hesitating to expose himself to the torture of so many strident voices. "Shall I go in?" he would ask himself. Even from the street he could sometimes hear the shouting. The haranguing provincial is terrible in his distress; when he has nothing more to say he falls back on his lungs; he seems proud of them, and rightly so; for by that means, he very often gets the better of his adversary and reduces him to silence.

"The *ultra* of Paris is tamed," thought Lucien, "but here I find him in his wild state. It is a terrible species—noisy, *insulting*, accustomed never to be contradicted, able to talk for three quarters of an hour with the use of a single phrase. The most unbearable *ultras* of Paris, the ones who quickly empty a salon there, would seem well-bred, moderate, quiet people in the drawing rooms of Nancy."

Their loud voices Lucien found it hardest of all to endure; these he could not get used to. "I really ought to study them the way one studies natural history. M. Cuvier used to tell us in the *Jardin des Plantes* that to study methodically, carefully noting down all the differences and resemblances, was the surest way of curing oneself of the repulsion that worms, insects, and hideous sea-crabs inspire."

When Lucien met one of his new friends on the street, he naturally had to stop to speak to him. They looked at each other; they had nothing to say to each other; they talked about the weather—the heat or the cold. For, your provincial reads nothing but the newspapers, and after the hour for discussing the news is past he is at a loss for something to talk about. "It is really a calamity to be rich here," thought Lucien. "The

rich have less to do than others and for that reason appear to be more malicious. They spend their time examining their neighbors' doings under a microscope. They have no other remedy for boredom but to spy on each other, and it is that which, for the first few months, conceals from a newcomer the sterility of their minds. When a father begins to tell some story known to his wife and children, the latter are obviously itching to interrupt, steal it from him, and recount it themselves; and often, with the pretext of adding some omitted detail, they begin the story all over again."

Sometimes, weary of the struggle, after dismounting from his horse, instead of getting himself dressed to go into the noble society of Nancy, Lucien would stay home and drink a glass of beer with his landlord, M. Bonard.

This worthy industrialist, who had little respect for power, said to Lucien one evening: "I could go to the Prefect himself and offer him a hundred louis for permission to import two thousand sacks of wheat from abroad, and yet his father has twenty thousand francs a year in emoluments."

Bonard had no more respect for the nobles of the city than for the magistrates.

"If it weren't for Du Poirier," he said, "these bastards wouldn't be so bad. I know that he comes to see you often. Well, I warn you, be careful! These nobles," he went on, "shake in their boots whenever the post from Paris is four hours late. Then they come running to me to sell their crops of wheat in advance. They are on their knees begging for gold, and next day, reassured by the news which has finally arrived, they barely return my greeting in the street. As for me, I do not think my honesty in the least compromised if I make them pay a louis extra for each rudeness. . . . I have an understanding with the valets they send to deliver their grain. For, would you believe it, sir, miserly as they are, they haven't the guts to come themselves to see their wheat weighed. At the fourth

or fifth bushel, fat M. de Sanréal says that the dust hurts his lungs. A funny sort of *individual* to be thinking of re-establishing statute labor, Jesuits, and the ancient regime against us."

One evening after muster, while the officers were riding around the Parade Grounds, Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin gave way to an access of animosity against our hero.

"What about those four or five gaudy liveries with all their galloons you display on the streets? It has a very bad effect on the regiment."

"Faith, Colonel, I don't know of any article of the regulations that forbids spending money when one has it."

"Are you mad to talk to the Colonel like that?" his friend Filloteau whispered to him, taking him aside. "He'll do you an ugly turn."

"And what can he do? I think he already hates me as much as anyone can hate a man he sees so rarely. But I certainly am not going to truckle to a man who hates me without my having given him any reason to.

"At this particular moment, Colonel, I have *taken a notion* to these liveries; and, in addition to the liveries, I had twelve pairs of foils sent from Paris at the same time."

"Ah! What a fire-eater!"

"Why! not at all, Colonel! Upon my word, you haven't another officer in the regiment less fatuous or more peaceable than I. I am not looking for trouble and I hope nobody is going to come looking for it. I shall be perfectly polite and perfectly reasonable with everyone. But if anybody tries to plague me, he'll find me ready."

Two days later, Colonel Malher sent for Lucien and, with an embarrassed and hypocritical air, forbade him to keep more than two liveried servants. So Lucien promptly dressed the others in ordinary civilian suits, but which were the last word in elegance and formed a ludicrous contrast to the wearers' naturally coarse and clumsy appearance. He had them made

by one of the tailors of Nancy, and this circumstance completed the success of Lucien's jest, doing him much honor in high society. Madame de Commercy complimented him, and, as for Mesdames d'Hocquincourt and de Puylaurens, both these ladies were quite mad about him.

Lucien wrote his mother a detailed description of the incident. The Colonel, on his part, in a letter to the Minister, censured Second-Lieutenant Leuwen severely. This Lucien had expected. About this time it seemed to him that his stock rose in the drawing rooms of Nancy. As it happened, Du Poirier had been showing everybody the answers he had received from friends in Paris to his letters asking for information on the social and business standing of the house of Van Peters, Leuwen and Company. The replies could not have been more favorable. "That house," he was told, "is one of the very few that, on occasion, buys news from the ministers, or exploits it on a fifty-fifty basis."

It was M. Leuwen Senior who indulged particularly in this somewhat risky business which, ruinous in the long run, makes for agreeable and influential connections. He was on the best terms with all the ministries and heard of Colonel Malher's reprimand in time.

This affair over his son's liveries amused him enormously. He at once began pulling strings, and one month later Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin received a most unpleasant ministerial letter.

The Colonel was very much tempted to detail Lucien to a detachment being sent to a certain manufacturing city where the workers were beginning to form a *mutual protection society*. But, after all, when one is head of a corps one has to eat humble pie. Meeting Lucien, the Colonel said to him with the perfidious smile of a man of the lower orders who thinks he is being shrewd:

"Young man, I have been informed of your prompt obedi-

ence in regard to the liveries. I am pleased with you. Have as many men in livery as you choose. But mind Papa's purse!"

"Colonel, I have the honor of thanking you," replied Lucien deliberately. "*My Papa* has written me on the subject. I should even be willing to wager that he has seen the Minister."

The smile accompanying the last remark was extremely distasteful to the Colonel. "Ah, if only I weren't a colonel with the ambition of becoming a major-general!" thought Malher, "my sword would answer that last remark, the insolent brat!" And he saluted the second-lieutenant with the frank, abrupt air of an old soldier.

And so it was that through a combination of force and prudence, as the serious books say, Lucien fairly doubled the hate against him in the regiment. No unpleasant remark, however, was brought to him officially. Several of his comrades were amiable enough, but Lucien had formed the bad habit of speaking to his comrades only as much as strictest politeness demanded. By means of this amiable way of living he bored himself mortally and contributed in no way to the pleasures of the young officers of his own age; he had the faults of his century.

By this time the effect of novelty, that had at first made Nancy society seem amusing, had completely worn off. Lucien knew all the characters by heart. He was reduced to philosophizing. He decided that there was more naturalness here than in Paris, but, as a natural consequence, that the fools were much more tiresome in Nancy. "What I find completely lacking in all these people," thought Lucien, "is the unexpected." This unexpected Lucien sometimes glimpsed in Doctor Du Poirier and in Madame de Puylaurens.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

LUCIEN had never yet met in society that Madame de Chasteller who had seen him thrown off his horse the day of his arrival in Nancy; he had forgotten her; but from force of habit he still rode through the Rue de la Pompe almost every day. He was now much more apt to glance at the liberal officer, the spy stationed at the bookseller Schmidt's, than at the window with the parrot-green shutters.

One afternoon these shutters were open. Lucien noticed a pair of charming embroidered muslin curtains. Almost unconsciously, he began to put his horse through its paces. It was not the prefect's English horse but a little Hungarian nag that took it in bad part. Indeed his Hungarian mount was so incensed and gave such extraordinary leaps and bounds that two or three times Lucien was on the point of being unseated.

"What! on the very same spot!" he thought, flushing with anger. And to add to his chagrin, at the most critical moment, he saw the little curtain being discreetly drawn aside. Evidently someone was watching him. It was, as a matter of fact, Madame de Chasteller who was saying to herself: "Ah! that's my young officer about to have another fall." She had often watched him ride past, and thought that he wore his clothes with an easy elegance quite free from all stiffness. In the end, Lucien suffered the extreme mortification of being thrown by his little Hungarian beast not ten paces from the spot where he had fallen that first day. "It must be fate!" he said. "I am predestined to appear ridiculous in the eyes of this young woman."

He could not get over his discomfiture all evening. "I really



should try to meet her," he thought, "just to see if she can look at me without laughing."

That evening at Madame de Commercy's he told of his misadventure. It became the topic of the hour, and he had the pleasure of hearing it repeated to each new arrival. He asked Madame de Serpierre why he had never seen Madame de Chasteller in society.

"Her father, the Marquis de Pontlevé," she replied, "has just recovered from an attack of gout. Even though she was brought up in Paris it is his daughter's duty to stay with him; and, moreover, we have not the honor of pleasing her."

One of the ladies sitting next to Madame de Serpierre interjected an acid remark, whereupon Madame de Serpierre capped this with another.

"But here," thought Lucien, "is pure envy; or does Madame de Chasteller's conduct offer them a happy excuse?" And he remembered what M. Bouchard, the post-master, had told him the day of his arrival on the subject of M. de Busant de Sicile, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Twentieth Hussars.

Next morning all through drill Lucien could think of nothing but his misadventure of the previous day. . . . "Yet riding a horse is perhaps the only thing that I can really do creditably. I dance badly. I am not brilliant in a drawing room. It is plain that Providence wishes to humiliate me. . . . By Gad! if I pass her on the street I am certainly going to bow to that young woman; for surely my two falls constitute an introduction; and if she takes my bow for an impertinence, so much the better, it will at least wipe from her memory the recollection of my ridiculous falls."

Four or five days later, going on foot to the barracks for evening stable-call, Lucien saw a rather tall young woman wearing a very simple hat at the corner of the street a few paces ahead of him. He seemed to recognize the lady's hair, remarkable for its abundance and its color, like that hair which

had made such an impression on him three months earlier. In fact, the lady was Madame de Chasteller. Her light youthful step reminded him of Paris. It was a pleasant surprise.

"If she recognizes me she can't help laughing in my face."

Lucien looked into her eyes as he passed. But the simplicity and seriousness of their expression suggested a slightly sad reverie without any sign of laughter. "I must say," he thought, "there wasn't the least hint of mockery in the glance she perforce gave me. She was obliged to look at me as one looks at an obstacle or any object that confronts one on the street. . . . I have just played the role of a cart. . . . How flattering! . . . In those beautiful eyes there was even a touch of shyness. . . . But, after all, how do I know that she recognized me as the unlucky horseman?"

Lucien recalled his plan of bowing to Madame de Chasteller only long after she had passed; her modest and even timid glance had seemed to him so noble that, when she passed him again coming from the other direction, he lowered his eyes in spite of himself.

The three long hours of drill that morning did not seem to our hero as long as usual. He kept recalling that glance which had squarely met his, and which had nothing provincial about it. "Since my arrival in Nancy I have really had only one desire in the midst of all my boredom: to wipe out the ridiculous impression which that young woman must have of me. . . . And if I can't even succeed in this innocent project I am worse than bored, I am really idiotic."

That evening Lucien outdid himself in deference and attentions toward Madame de Serpierre and the five or six intimate friends grouped around her. He listened with every appearance of lively interest to an endless and acrimonious diatribe against the court of Louis-Philippe which concluded with a bitter criticism of Madame d'Hocquincourt. This diplomatic maneuver permitted him at the end of an hour to

go over to the little table where, with one of her friends, Mademoiselle Théodelinde sat sewing. He gave further details on his latest fall.

"The worst of it is," he added, "that I had an audience, and one for whom such an event was no novelty."

"And who was that?" asked Mademoiselle Théodelinde.

"A young woman who lives on the second floor of the Hôtel de Pontlevé."

"Why, it must be Madame de Chasteller!"

"That consoles me somewhat, for I have heard very bad things about her."

"The fact is she's considered toplofty as the clouds. She is not loved in Nancy, but we only know her through an occasional appearance in society, or rather," added the good Théodelinde, "we really don't know her at all. She takes her time about returning calls. I should venture to say that there is a certain nonchalance in her disposition and that she dislikes living so far from Paris."

"Often," put in Mademoiselle de Serpierre's friend, "she orders her carriage and, after letting it wait for an hour, dismisses it. They say she is odd and unsociable."

"It must be quite annoying for a woman with any delicacy," rejoined Mademoiselle Théodelinde, "not to be able to dance with a man without his planning to marry her."

"Just the opposite for us poor dowerless girls," bewailed her friend. "After all, she is the richest widow in the whole province."

Then they began talking of the excessively arrogant character of M. de Pontlevé. Lucien waited to hear the name of M. de Busant mentioned. "But I am absurd. How could young girls be expected to know about such things?"

At that moment a blond, insipid-looking young man entered the drawing room.

"Look," said Théodelinde, "that is the man who probably

bores Madame de Chasteller the most. He is M. de Blancet, her cousin, who has been in love with her for ten or fifteen years, and is always talking sentimentally about this childhood love of his, a love that has increased notably since Madame de Chasteller became a prodigiously wealthy widow. M. de Blancet's pretensions are looked upon with favor by M. de Pontlevé, whose most humble servitor he professes to be, and M. de Pontlevé insists that M. de Blancet be invited three times a week to dine with his dear cousin."

"And yet my father says that M. de Pontlevé dreads only one thing in the world, the marriage of his daughter, and that he uses M. de Blancet to keep other suitors away, but will never allow him to get control of that handsome fortune. He intends to keep its administration in his own hands. And that's why he won't let her go back to Paris."

"M. de Pontlevé made a terrible scene the other day," continued Mademoiselle Théodelinde, "toward the end of his attack of gout, because she would not dismiss her coachman. 'I won't be going out in the evening for a long time,' he said, 'and my own coachman can very well drive you. Why should you keep a scamp you never use?' He was almost as violent as when he wanted to force her to break off with her best friend, Madame de Constantin."

"Isn't she the very witty woman whose amusing repartee M. de Lanfort was talking about the other day?"

"Exactly! M. de Pontlevé is frightfully avaricious and timorous, and he is afraid of the influence of Madame de Constantin's independent character on his daughter. He has made plans to emigrate in case of the downfall of Louis-Philippe and the proclamation of the Republic. During the first emigration he was reduced to the most desperate extremities. He has a great deal of land but very little ready money, they say, and if he crosses the Rhine again, he counts largely on his daughter's fortune."

The conversation continued thus agreeably between Lucien, Théodelinde and her friend, until Madame de Serpierre thought it her duty as a mother to interrupt this intimate little group, which she, nevertheless, observed with the greatest satisfaction.

"And what are you gabbing about over here?" she said, with a sprightly air. "You look as though you were enjoying yourselves."

"We were talking about Madame de Chasteller," said Théodelinde's friend.

At once Madame de Serpierre's face changed completely and took on an expression of lofty severity. "The adventures of that lady," she said, "have no place in the conversation of young girls. She has brought with her from Paris certain ways that are most dangerous for your future, young ladies, and for the consideration you may expect from the world. Unhappily the immense fortune she enjoys and the glamor it casts over her, may tend to hide the gravity of her faults. And you, sir," she added, turning to Lucien, "will do me the favor, when you talk to my daughters, never to mention the adventures of Madame de Chasteller."

"Horrible female!" thought Lucien. "For once we were enjoying ourselves and she has had to spoil it. And to think that I listened patiently to her deadly stories for a whole hour!"

Lucien took his leave with the haughtiest and coldest air he could manage. He went straight to his house and was delighted to find his landlord, worthy M. Bonard, the grain merchant, at home.

Little by little, through boredom and not in the least thinking of love, Lucien began to act like any lover. This amused him immensely. Sunday morning he stationed one of his servants on sentry duty opposite the door of the Hôtel de Pontlevé. When the man came to report that Madame de Chasteller had

just entered the Chapel of the Propagation, one of Nancy's little churches, he hurried after her.

But this church was so tiny and his horses (he had sworn never to go out without them) made such a noise on the paving stones, and his presence in uniform was so conspicuous, that he felt ashamed of his lack of delicacy. He could barely see Madame de Chasteller who was sitting at the back of a dark chapel. It seemed to Lucien that he detected great simplicity in her. "Unless I am very much mistaken this woman gives not a thought to the people around her. Moreover her deportment is perfectly in keeping with the deepest piety."

Next Sunday Lucien arrived at the Chapel of the Propagation on foot; but even so, he felt ill at ease. His appearance was altogether too striking.

It would have been difficult to be more distinguished than Madame de Chasteller. But Lucien, who had taken a seat from which he would have a good view of her when she left, noticed that when she failed to keep her eyes carefully lowered, they were of so singular a beauty that they betrayed all her passing emotions. "Those eyes," thought Lucien, "must often make their mistress very angry with herself; try as she may she cannot make them inconspicuous."

That day they expressed a profound thoughtfulness and melancholy. "Is it still M. de Busant de Sicile who has the honor of affecting those glances?"

This question was enough to spoil all his pleasure.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I NEVER SUPPOSED garrison love affairs were subject to such difficulties." This sensible though vulgar thought seemed to sober Lucien, and he fell into a profound reverie.

"Well, *easy* or not," he said to himself after a while, "it would be charming to be able to talk with such a person in simple friendliness." But *charming* was hardly the word suited to the expression of her face. "I cannot," he continued more calmly, "pretend that there is not a painful distance between a lieutenant-colonel and a simple second-lieutenant; and an even more alarming distance between the noble name of M. de Busant de Sicile, companion of Charles d'Anjou, brother of Saint-Louis, and the little bourgeois name of Leuwen. . . . On the other hand, it is possible that my brilliant liveries and my English horses endow me with a semi-nobility in the eyes of this provincial soul. . . . Perhaps," he added, laughing, "even total nobility. . . .

"No," he said, getting up in a sort of fury. "Mean thoughts cannot possibly exist with such a noble countenance. . . . And if she does entertain such ideas, it is only because of her caste. In her they are not ridiculous, because she adopted them, just as she learned her catechism, at the age of six; they are not ideas, they are sentiments. The provincial nobility gives a great deal of importance to liveries and coach varnish.

"But why all these vain scruples? I must admit I am quite ridiculous. What right have I to delve into such intimate questions? I should like to spend a few evenings in one of the drawing rooms where she is in the habit of going. . . . My

father has challenged me to get myself admitted to the first drawing rooms of Nancy. I have been admitted. It has been difficult; now it is about time to find something to do in these drawing rooms. I am dying of boredom, and excess of boredom may make me inattentive—a thing that the vanity of these country gentlemen would never forgive me, even the best of them.

“Why shouldn’t I make up my mind, if only, as Mademoiselle Sylviane would say, to have an aim in life, to succeed in spending a few evenings with this young woman? It was pretty silly of me to think of love and to reproach myself! This pastime will not prevent my being a man worthy of esteem and serving my country when the occasion arises.

“Besides,” Lucien added, smiling sadly, “probably her *amiable* remarks will quickly cure me of the pleasure I anticipate from seeing her. With rather more aristocratic manners and conversation more in keeping with a different station in life, she will be just a second edition of Mademoiselle Berchu. She will be acrimonious and bigoted like Madame de Serpierre, or intoxicated with nobility and talking titles and ancestors, like Madame de Commercy—who told me yesterday, mixing up all the dates and, worst of all, going on forever, how one of her ancestors named Enguerrand had followed François I to the wars against the Albigenses, and was constable of Auvergne. . . . But what of it? She is pretty and what more could I ask to while away two or three hours? After all, while I listen to her nonsense I shall be only a foot or two away from her beauty. It will even be curious philosophically to observe how ridiculous or mean thoughts fail to spoil such features. For nothing could be more absurd than Lavater’s theories.”

But what finally settled the matter for Lucien was the thought of what a dunce he’d be if he couldn’t manage to meet the lady in one of the drawing rooms she frequented, or



be received in her own when she stayed at home. "This will require some exertion like the storming of the salons of Nancy." By means of all these philosophical arguments the fatal word of love was avoided, and Lucien felt absolved. He had always made fun of the pitiful state of Edgard, one of his cousins. "To allow one's self-esteem to be dependent on the opinion of a woman whose own self-esteem is dependent on the fact that her great-grandfather killed some Albigenes under François I! What a mixture of absurdities! In such a contest a man is always more ridiculous than a woman."

Despite all Lucien's fine logic, M. de Busant de Sicile occupied our hero's thoughts as much as, if not more than, Madame de Chasteller. He displayed the greatest ingenuity in asking indirect questions on the subject of M. de Busant, and the sort of welcome he had received. M. Gauthier, M. Bonard, and their friends, and all the middle-class society of Nancy with their habitual exaggeration, knew that M. de Busant de Sicile belonged to the highest nobility and had been Madame de Chasteller's lover, and nothing more. In the drawing rooms of Madame de Commercy and Madame de Puylaurens things were not stated quite so frankly. There, when he asked questions about M. de Busant, people seemed to remember that Lucien, after all, belonged to the enemy camp, and he was never able to extract a plain answer. To Mademoiselle Théodelinde he could not very well broach such a subject, and she seemed to be the only person who was not bent on deceiving him. Lucien never succeeded in finding out the truth about M. de Busant. As a matter of fact, M. de Busant was a very worthy and very brave gentleman, but without the least wit in the world. Upon his arrival in Nancy, misunderstanding the welcome he received and quite forgetting his expanding waistline, his insignificant features, and his forty years, he had proceeded to fall in love with Madame de Chasteller. He had annoyed both her father and herself with his incessant

calls which she had never succeeded in making less frequent. Her father was particularly anxious to stand in well with the army in Nancy. If his correspondence (entirely innocent) with Charles X were ever discovered, who would be ordered to arrest him? Who would cover his flight? And if suddenly it were learned that the Republic had been established in Paris, who would protect him against the rabble of the province?

But poor Lucien was very far from knowing all this. He noticed that Du Poirier always avoided his questions with admirable skill.

In society he was told repeatedly: "That really superior officer is the descendant of an aide-de-camp of the Duc d'Anjou, brother of Saint-Louis, who helped the Duke conquer Sicily."

He learned a little more from M. d'Antin who said to Lucien one day:

"You were very wise to take his lodgings, for they are by far the most tolerable in town. Poor Busant is the best of fellows, not an idea in his head but excellent manners. He used to give very charming little dinners at the *Green Huntsman* in the Burelviller woods a quarter of a league from here; and every day at midnight he thought he was gay because he was slightly drunk."

By dint of thinking about ways and means of meeting Madame de Chasteller in a drawing room, all desire to cut a figure in Nancy, which Lucien had indeed begun to despise perhaps more than he should, was replaced by the desire to occupy the thoughts, if not the heart, of this pretty toy. "Such a head must contain some curious ideas!" he said to himself. "A young provincial *ultra* going direct from the convent of the Sacred Heart to the court of Charles X, and forced to flee Paris during the *July Days* of 1830." Such indeed had been Madame de Chasteller's history.

In 1814, after the First Restoration, the Marquis de Pontlevé

was in despair at finding himself in Nancy instead of being attached to the Court.

"I see," he said, "the same distinction again being made between the nobility of the Court and the rest of us. My cousin, who bears the same name as myself, because he is at Court, will command as colonel at twenty-two the regiment in which, by the grace of God, I shall be a captain at forty." This was M. de Pontlevé's principal grievance, and he made no mystery of it to anybody. He soon acquired another. In the elections of 1816, he presented himself as candidate for the Chamber of Deputies and received six votes—counting his own. He fled Paris, vowing that after such an affront he would never set foot in that city again, and took with him his daughter, then six years old. To give himself a standing in Paris he solicited a peerage. M. de Puylaurens, at that time in favor at court, advised him to place his daughter in the convent of the Sacred Heart. M. de Pontlevé followed his advice and was soon to realize its full value. He himself became assiduous in his devotions, and by these means succeeded in 1828 in marrying his daughter to one of the major-generals attached to the court of Charles X. This was considered a most advantageous marriage. M. de Chasteller was wealthy. He looked older than he really was, not having a hair on his head; but he had astonishing vivacity and a grace of manner that barely escaped being cloying. His enemies at court applied to him Boileau's verse on his wife's favorite novels:

In which even *I hate you* is said with tenderness.

Well schooled by a husband who worshiped all the little punctilios which count for so much at court, Madame de Chasteller was well received by the princesses, and soon enjoyed a very enviable position. She had court boxes at the *Bouffes* and at the Opera, and, during the summer, apartments at Meudon and at Rambouillet. She was lucky enough never to

bother her pretty head about politics or reading the newspapers. All she knew of politics was from the sessions of the *French Academy* which her husband, having high hopes of one day being a member, insisted on her attending. He was a great admirer of the verses of Millevoye and the prose of M. de Fontanes.

The musket shots of 1830 came to disturb these innocent ideas. Seeing the *rabble on the streets*, that was his way of putting it, made him think of the murders of MM. Foullon and Berthier in the first days of the Revolution. The proximity of the Rhine seemed to him to offer the greatest assurance of safety, and he had sought refuge on an estate belonging to his wife near Nancy.

Though somewhat affected, M. de Chasteller was most affable and even amusing in the ordinary course of events, but had never been famous for having much character. He could never get over this third flight of the family he adored. "I see God's hand in this," he would say, shedding tears in all the drawing rooms of Nancy. Soon he died, leaving his wife an income of twenty-five thousand pounds in the public funds. He owed this fortune to the King and the loans of 1817; and in the envious gossip of Nancy drawing rooms, it quickly mounted to eighteen hundred thousand or two million.

Lucien had the greatest difficulty in the world gleaning these simple facts. But the hate which Madame de Chasteller inspired in Madame de Serpierre's drawing room and the common sense of Mademoiselle Théodelinde made it easier for Lucien to get at the truth.

Eighteen months after the death of her husband, Madame de Chasteller dared pronounce the words: *a return to Paris*. "What, my daughter!" cried M. de Pontlevé with the voice and gestures of the righteously indignant Alceste in Moliere's play: "Your princes are in Prague and you would dare to show yourself in Paris! What would the shades of M. de Chasteller

say? Ah, if we must quit our penates, it is not in that direction we should turn our horses' heads. Stay and take care of your old father in Nancy! Or, if we are still able to put one foot before the other, let us fly to Prague!"

M. de Pontlevé had that ornate and discursive style of speech which had been the fashion in the time of Louis XVI and which then passed for wit.

Madame de Chasteller had to give up all idea of returning to Paris. At the mere mention of Paris her father would become violent and make a scene. But as compensation, Madame de Chasteller had fine horses, a pretty calash, and servants in elegant liveries. This handsome equipage was to be seen more frequently on the neighboring highroads than on the streets of Nancy. Madame de Chasteller went as often as possible to see her old friend of convent days, Madame de Constantin, who lived in a little town a few leagues from Nancy. But M. de Pontlevé was mortally jealous of Madame de Constantin, and had done everything in his power to break up their friendship.

Several times during his long rides, Lucien had seen Madame de Chasteller's calash several leagues from Nancy.

At midnight, the day of one of these chance meetings, Lucien had gone to smoke one of his little cigars rolled in licorice paper in the Rue de la Pompe. There, still relying on Madame de Chasteller's taste for brilliant uniforms, he forced himself to build his hopes on the elegance of his horses and his servants, then dashed those hopes by reminding himself of his bourgeois name. But even as he reasoned thus bravely with himself, his thoughts were very different.

After first hearing her history he had said to himself: "This young woman is vexed with her father; she must be hurt by the interest he displays in her fortune; Nancy bores her; it is quite conceivable that she should seek a little diversion in a harmless flirtation." Then the recollection of that frank, chaste

visage gave rise to doubts, even on the subject of a flirtation.

Finally, on the evening of which we are speaking: "What the devil!" said Lucien. "I am really an imbecile! I ought to be overjoyed by her good will toward uniforms."

And the more he insisted on this reason for hope, the more despondent he became.

"Is it possible," he said at length half aloud, "that I am fool enough to be in love?" and he stopped dead in the middle of the street as though a thunderbolt had struck him. Happily, at midnight there was no one on the street to notice the expression of his face, and to laugh at him.

The idea of being in love filled him with shame, he felt himself degraded. "So I am like Edgard after all," he thought. "I must have a very small, feeble soul! Education has been able to strengthen it momentarily, but its true character asserts itself on exceptional occasions and in unusual situations. What! While the entire youth of France takes sides in such great causes, am I going to spend my life gazing into a pair of beautiful eyes like the ridiculous heroes of Corneille? So this is the sad result of this politic and prudent life I have been leading here:

Who does not have the spirit of his age  
Of his age knows all the sorrows.

I should have done much better to follow my original idea and carry off a little dancer in Metz! Or better still, I should have made love to Madame de Puylaurens or Madame d'Hocquincourt. With these noble ladies I should have been in no danger of a flirtation developing into anything beyond a little society love affair.

"If this goes on much longer I shall become quite mad and altogether tiresome. This is worse than the Saint-Simonism my father accuses me of! Who thinks seriously about women to-day? A man like my mother's friend, the Duc de —, who, at

the end of an honorable career, having paid his debt on the battlefield, and also in the House of Peers by refusing his vote, amuses himself feathering the nest of some little dancer as one would play with a canary.

"But for me, at my age . . . ! What young man today would dare even mention a serious passion for a woman? If this is just a simple pastime, all very well; but if it is a serious attachment there is no excuse for me; and the proof that I am getting serious, that this folly is not a simple pastime, is that Madame de Chasteller's weakness for brilliant uniforms, instead of delighting me, makes me sad. I believe in my duty to my country. So far my self-respect has been due principally to the fact that I am not just a selfish egotist thinking of nothing but enjoying the prize I owe to chance; I respect myself, above all, because I have recognized my duties to the fatherland, and felt the need of winning the respect of men with high ideals. I am at the age of action; at any moment the voice of the fatherland may make itself heard; I may be called; my whole mind should be bent on trying to discover the true interests of France which scoundrels are trying to obscure. A single head, a single soul, are not enough to see them plainly in the midst of such intricate duties. And yet this is the moment I choose to become the slave of a little provincial *ultra*! The devil take her and her street!" And Lucien suddenly left the Rue de la Pompe and went home. But a lively sense of shame kept him awake. Daylight found him pacing up and down in front of the barracks waiting impatiently for the sound of the bugle. After roll-call, he walked a little way with two of his comrades; for the first time he found their company agreeable.

When he was alone once more: "Do what I will," he said, "I cannot see in those eyes of hers, so penetrating yet so chaste, the counterpart of a ballet dancer of the Opera." During the whole day he was unable to make up his mind about Madame

de Chasteller. No matter how hard he tried he could not picture her in the role of the mistress whom every lieutenant of a garrison thinks himself in honor bound to have. "And yet," whispered reason, "she must be so terribly bored! Her father holds her here while she pines for Paris; he tries to separate her from her best friend; a little flirtation is really the only consolation for the poor soul."

This very logical excuse only served to redouble our hero's depression. In reality he saw very well the absurdity of his position: he was in love, and obviously with the desire of being successful, yet he was unhappy and ready to despise his mistress precisely because of this possibility of success.

It was a painful day for Lucien. Everyone seemed to have conspired to talk to him about M. Thomas de Busant and the agreeable life he had led in Nancy. They compared it with the café and tavern existence of Lieutenant-Colonel Filloteau and the three squadron commanders.

Enlightenment seemed to come to him from every side, for the name of Madame de Chasteller was linked on every lip with M. de Busant; and yet his heart persisted in holding her up to him as an angel of purity.

He no longer took the least pleasure in showing off for the admiration of the whole town his elegant liveries, his fine horses, his calash that rattled all the wooden houses of Nancy as it rolled by. He almost despised himself for having found amusement in such petty things, and forgot the excess of boredom they had been called upon to dispel.

During the days that followed, Lucien was very much perturbed. No longer was he that thoughtless soul amused by the least trifle. There were moments when he despised himself with all his heart. But in spite of his remorse he could not keep himself from riding through the Rue de la Pompe several times a day.



On entering Madame de Commercy's drawing room a week after he had made this humiliating discovery about himself, Lucien found Madame de Chasteller there paying a call. He was unable to say a word; he turned every color of the rainbow; and, although he was the only gentleman present, when Madame de Chasteller rose to go, he did not have wit enough to offer her his arm to escort her to her carriage. He left Madame de Commercy's despising himself just a little more.

This republican, this man of action, who loved horse drill as preparation for battle, had never thought of love except as a dangerous and despised precipice into which he felt sure of never falling. Moreover, he believed this passion to be extremely rare everywhere except at the theater. He was astonished at everything that was happening to him, like a wild bird caught in a snare and caged; and like this terrified captive, he could do nothing but beat his head against the bars of his cage. "Think of it!" he cried, "being unable to say a word, and forgetting the simple rules of good breeding! Thus my weak will succumbs to the attraction of a transgression I have not even the courage to commit!"

Next day Lucien was not on duty. He took advantage of the permission he had received from his Colonel, and plunged deep into the Burelviller woods. . . . Toward evening he learned from a peasant that he was seven leagues from Nancy.

"I must admit I'm a greater fool than I thought! Is it by dashing through the woods that I am going to win the good will of the drawing rooms of Nancy, and have another chance of meeting Madame de Chasteller and of making up for my idiotic behavior?" He hastened back to town and went to Madame de Serpierre's. Mademoiselle Théodelinde was his friend, and this soul that thought itself so indomitable had need of a friendly face that day. Lucien by no means dared to speak of his weakness; but sitting beside her, his heart felt more at

peace. He had the highest esteem for M. Gauthier but the latter was a priest of the Republic, and anything which did not directly contribute to the happiness of France, a *self-governing* France, seemed unworthy of his attention, and childish. Du Poirier would have been the ideal counselor, for, besides his general knowledge of the people and affairs of Nancy, he dined once a week with the person whom Lucien had such an overwhelming desire to know. But Lucien was determined, above all things, not to give the doctor a chance of betraying him.

While Lucien was engaged in recounting to Mademoiselle Théodelinde all the things he had observed during his long ride, Madame de Chasteller was announced. Instantly all Lucien's powers forsook him; he tried in vain to talk; what little he said was very nearly unintelligible.

He could not have been more surprised at himself if, galloping into battle with his regiment, he had suddenly turned tail and fled. This thought plunged him into the most violent distress. So then, he could not depend upon his conduct under any circumstances. What a lesson in humility! What a need for action, so that at last he could be sure of himself, trusting no longer to vain probabilities but to deeds.

Lucien was torn out of his profound reverie by a very startling event: Madame de Serpierre was introducing him to Madame de Chasteller, and accompanying this ceremony with the most excessive flattery. Lucien turned crimson and tried in vain to find something courteous to say, while he was being extolled above all for his ready wit, so remarkable for its aptness and Parisian elegance. Even Madame de Serpierre at last became aware of the state he was in.

Madame de Chasteller had recourse to some pretext to cut short her visit. When she rose, Lucien this time thought of offering her his arm to her carriage, but his legs were trembling so, that he decided it would not be prudent to leave his chair;

he was afraid of making a spectacle of himself in public. Madame de Chasteller would have had reason to say: "I think, sir, it is I who should offer you my arm!"

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

**I** NEVER THOUGHT you were so susceptible to ridicule," said Mademoiselle Théodelinde when Madame de Chasteller had left the drawing room. "Is it because Madame de Chasteller saw you in the not very heroic position of Saint Paul when he beheld the vision of the third heaven, that her presence so petrified you?"

Lucien accepted this interpretation; he was afraid of betraying himself should he offer the slightest explanation, and as soon as he felt that his departure would not seem odd, he made his escape. The moment he was alone he found some consolation in the very excess of the absurdity of what had befallen him. "Have I by chance the pest?" he said to himself. "Since the physical effect was so overwhelming I am not morally responsible! If I broke a leg, I should not be able to march with my regiment."

There was to be a dinner-party at the de Serpierres'—a modest affair, for they were anything but affluent. But, thanks to those prejudices of the nobility which are so tenacious in the provinces and which alone could nourish the hope of finding husbands for the six daughters of the former King's Lieutenant, it was no small honor to be invited to dinner at their house. Madame de Serpierre had indeed hesitated for a long time before inviting Lucien, his name being really too bourgeois. However, as usual in the Nineteenth Century, expediency finally won.

The kindly and simple Théodelinde did not approve this strategy, but she was obliged to obey. The little card placed on the napkin next to hers bore Lucien's name. The former King's Lieutenant had written: "M. le *Chevalier* Leuwen." Théodelinde knew that Lucien would be shocked by this gratuitous ennoblement.

Madame de Chasteller, having been unable to come to another dinner given two months before because of M. de Pontlevé's gout, was invited this evening. Utterly ashamed of her mother's high diplomacy, just before the arrival of the guests Théodelinde got permission, not without considerable difficulty, to place Madame de Chasteller's card on M. le *Chevalier* Leuwen's right, her own on his left.

When Lucien arrived, Madame de Serpierre, with all the duplicity of a mother with six marriageable daughters, drew him aside and said:

"I have put you next to the beautiful Madame de Chasteller; she is the best match in the province and has the reputation of not being indifferent to uniforms; so you see you can thank me for giving you an opportunity of cultivating this acquaintance."

During dinner, Théodelinde found Lucien pretty dull; he said little and what he said was not worth saying.

Madame de Chasteller talked to our hero on the subject that was monopolizing all the conversations of Nancy at the moment. Madame Grandet, the wife of the Collector-General, was about to arrive from Paris and would undoubtedly give the most brilliant affairs. Her husband was very rich, and she had the reputation of being one of the prettiest women in Paris. This subject of conversation was only languidly pursued by our second-lieutenant; he tried to show some animation but his mind was a blank, and all he could manage were the briefest questions addressed to Madame de Chasteller, which were almost curt.

After dinner an excursion was proposed, and Lucien had the honor of escorting Théodelinde and Madame de Chasteller on the pond that was dignified by the name of the Lac de la Commanderie. Several times before, Lucien had taken the de Serpierre young ladies out rowing in perfect safety, but he now barely escaped capsizing the boat and shipwrecking Théodelinde and Madame de Chasteller in a lake that boasted a depth of four feet.

Two days later occurred the birthday of a certain august personage who no longer resided in France. Madame de Marcilly, the widow of a *cordon rouge*, thought it incumbent upon her to give a ball; but the reason for giving the ball did not appear on the card of invitation; and this omission seemed a reprehensible timidity to seven or eight excessively right-thinking ladies, who therefore failed to honor the ball with their presence.

Of the entire Twenty-seventh Lancers, only the Colonel, Lucien and young Riquebourg were invited. But once they had entered the Marquise de Marcilly's drawing rooms, partisan spirit made the noble society, habitually so polite—so boringly polite—forget the simplest rules of good breeding. Colonel Malher de Saint-Mégrin was treated as an intruder and almost as a police spy; Lucien, on the other hand, as the spoiled child of the house. A real infatuation for this pretty lieutenant was quite evident.

When the company had assembled, everyone proceeded to the ballroom. In the middle of a garden planted by King Stanislas, the father-in-law of Louis XV, and laid out in a labyrinth of hedges after the fashion of the day, rose a very elegant pavilion, but badly neglected since the death of Charles XII's friend. To conceal the ravages of time it had been transformed into a magnificent tent. The Commander of the town, very much annoyed at not being able to attend the ball and to celebrate the birthday of the august personage,

had taken from the army stores and loaned for the occasion, two enormous tents known as *marquises*. They had been set up alongside of the pavilion with which they communicated through two great doors ornamented with Indian trophies, the color white being everywhere predominant. Paris could not have done it better. And all these decorations were the devoted work of the three Roller brothers.

Thanks to these charming tents, to the lively atmosphere of the ball, and also, undoubtedly, to the flattering reception accorded him, Lucien completely forgot his mortification and dejection. He was as pleased as a child by the beauty of the garden and the ballroom; these first sensations made another man of him.

This grave republican took a schoolboy delight in passing back and forth in front of Colonel Malher without speaking to him, without even deigning to look his way. In this he followed the general example: not one word was addressed to this colonel so proud of his reputation; he was left to himself *like a mangy dog*, the expression everyone had adopted to describe his unhappy position. And he did not even have the wit to leave the ball and to escape from this unanimous rudeness. "Here," thought Lucien, "it is he who does not *think right*, and I am even with him for his insolence over the reading room in the Rue de la Pompe. With these coarse souls one must lose no opportunity of making one's contempt felt; when simple people fail to notice them they merely put it down to the fear they inspire."

Upon his arrival, Lucien noticed that all the ladies were wearing green and white ribbons, which did not offend him in the least. "This insult is addressed to the head of the State, and a perfidious one. The exalted position of the State itself makes it impossible for any family, even a family of heroes, to insult it."

Behind one of the adjacent tents Lucien noticed a little retreat that was ablaze with light; there were perhaps forty burning candles that attracted Lucien by their dazzling effect. "It is like one of those street altars of the Corpus Christi procession," he thought. In the place of honor among the candles, like a sort of monstrance, hung the portrait of a young Scotsman. In this boy the painter (more right-thinking than right-painting) had tried to combine the amiable smiles of youth and a forehead charged with the thoughts of genius! He had thus succeeded in making an astonishing caricature with something monstrous about it.

All the ladies who entered quickly crossed the ballroom and went directly up to the portrait of the young Scotsman. There they would remain in silence for an instant affecting a very solemn air, then, turning, would resume their festive expression and go to shake hands with their hostess. Two or three ladies who went to greet Madame de Marcilly before honoring the portrait, were received very coldly and appeared in such a ridiculous light that one of them decided it would be the part of wisdom to swoon. Not one detail of all these rites was lost on Lucien. "We aristocrats," he laughed to himself, "if we stick together need fear no one; but, also, what nonsense one has to swallow with a straight face! It is amusing," he thought, "that the two rivals, Charles X and Louis-Philippe, both on the nation's pay-roll, while paying the nation's servants with the nation's money, think we are in debt to them personally."

After a cursory survey of the ball, which was really very beautiful, Lucien went dutifully over to the Boston table of Madame de Commercy, the "cousin of the Emperor," a title which Lucien heard her give herself five or six times during the course of a deadly half-hour.

"The vanity of these provincials inspires them with the

most incredible notions," he thought. "I feel like a traveler in a strange land."

"You are delightful, my dear sir," said the cousin of the Emperor, "and I certainly hate to part with such a *charming cavalier*, but I see that some of the young ladies over there are pining to dance; they will be looking daggers at me if I keep you any longer."

And Madame de Commercy pointed out several young ladies of the very *highest rank*.

Bravely our hero resigned himself to his fate; not only did he dance, but he talked; he found a few little ideas on a level with the intelligence, left uncultivated with intent, of these maidens of the provincial nobility. His courage was rewarded by the unanimous approval of Mesdames de Commercy, de Marcilly, de Serpierre, etc. He was the rage. Uniforms are popular in the East of France, a profoundly military region; and it was thanks largely to a uniform, so gracefully worn and almost unique in this society, that Lucien could be accounted the most brilliant guest at the ball.

At last he was able to dance a quadrille with Madame d'Hocquincourt. He proved himself brilliant, witty, quick in repartee. Madame d'Hocquincourt complimented him highly.

"You have always been most agreeable, but tonight you are another person," she said.

This remark was overheard by M. de Sanréal, and Lucien began to be very unpopular with the young men of society.

"Your success is putting these young gentlemen in a very bad humor," said Madame d'Hocquincourt. And as MM. Roller and d'Antin came up to her, she called out to Lucien who had moved away:

"Monsieur Leuwen, will you dance the next quadrille with me?"

"This is charming," reflected Lucien, "and something no



one would dream of doing in Paris! Really, there is something to be said for these foreign countries. People here are less timid than we are."

While he was dancing with Madame d'Hocquincourt, M. d'Antin approached them. Pretending that she had forgotten that she was engaged to him for this dance, Madame d'Hocquincourt began making excuses that were so droll and yet so stinging that Lucien, still dancing with her, could hardly keep from laughing aloud. Madame d'Hocquincourt was evidently trying to make M. d'Antin angry, and he kept protesting in vain that he had never counted on this quadrille with her.

"How can a man allow himself to be treated like that?" Lucien asked himself. "What won't a man stoop to for love!"

Madame d'Hocquincourt addressed the most amiable remarks to Lucien and spoke almost exclusively to him; but Lucien resented seeing poor M. d'Antin placed in such a humiliating position and, leaving Madame d'Hocquincourt, went to the other end of the ballroom and danced several waltzes with Madame de Puylaurens who was also extremely charming to him. He, who was such a bad dancer, was clearly the idol of the ball; he knew it very well and for the first time in his life he found some pleasure in that exercise. He was dancing a galop with Mademoiselle Théodelinde when, in a corner of the room, he caught sight of Madame de Chasteller.

All Lucien's dashing ease deserted him, all his wit vanished in the twinkling of an eye. Madame de Chasteller wore a simple white gown, and the simplicity of her attire would have seemed really ridiculous to the young men if she had been without fortune. In these cities of puerile vanity, balls are battlefields, and to neglect any advantage seemed a very marked affectation. It was felt that Madame de Chasteller should have worn her diamonds. The choice of such a modest and inexpensive gown was an act of eccentricity, deprecated

with an exaggerated show of profound pain by M. de Pontlevé, and secretly disapproved of by the timid M. de Blancet, who gave her his arm with ludicrous dignity.

These gentlemen were not altogether wrong. Nonchalance was probably the most profound trait of Madame de Chasteller's character. Behind that air of perfect gravity which her beauty rendered so imposing, she hid a happy, even a very gay disposition. Day-dreaming was her supreme pleasure. She seemed to pay little or no attention to all the little happenings around her, but not one of them escaped her. She saw them all, and it was indeed these little happenings that served to feed her pensiveness which everybody took for haughtiness. Although no detail of life escaped her, there were very few things that succeeded in touching her, and never the ones other people considered important.

For example: the very morning of the ball, Monsieur de Pontlevé had had a serious quarrel with her because of the indifference with which she had read a letter announcing a bankruptcy. And a few minutes later on the street, passing a tiny little old woman, hardly able to walk, almost in rags, whose shriveled skin was visible through a torn shirt, she had been moved to tears. No one in Nancy had divined her character; her intimate friend, Madame de Constantin, alone at times was the recipient of her confidences and would often make fun of her.

Madame de Chasteller, like the rest of the world, talked enough to keep up her end of a conversation, but to begin talking was always a trial for her.

There was only one thing in Paris she really missed and that was Italian music, which had the power of increasing to an amazing degree the intensity of her spells of dreaming. She thought very little about herself and even the ball we are describing had not been able to make her conscious of the role she should play, or to awaken in her an honest dash of

coquetry which most people believe to be innate in the character of all women.

As Lucien escorted Mademoiselle Théodelinde back to her mother, Madame de Serpierre could be heard loudly exclaiming:

"What is the meaning of that little white muslin frock? Is that the way to present oneself on such a day as this? She is the widow of a general officer attached to the very person of the King; she enjoys a fortune tripled and quadrupled by the generosity of the Bourbons. Madame de Chasteller should understand that to come to Madame de Marcilly's on the birthday of our adorable Princess is equivalent to presenting oneself at the Tuileries. What will the republicans say—seeing us treat the most sacred things so lightly? And isn't it the moment, when the entire mass of the common people is attacking these sacred things, for each one of us, according to our individual position, to show all the more courage and to do our duty? And she of all people," added Madame de Serpierre, "the only daughter of M. de Pontlevé who, rightly or wrongly, is the head of the nobility of this province, or at least gives us instructions as the commissioner of the King. That little head of hers understands nothing of all this!"

Madame de Serpierre was right; of course Madame de Chasteller was to be blamed, but not as much as she was blamed. "What will the republicans say?" cried all the noble ladies; and they thought of the next number of the *Aurore* which was to appear in two days.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MADAME DE CHASTELLER came up to Madame de Serpierre's group as the latter, in a very loud voice, was continuing her critical and monarchical reflections. Brusquely these acrimonious criticisms gave place to those trite and extravagant compliments which, in the provinces, pass current for urbanity. Lucien was delighted to find Madame de Serpierre ridiculous. A quarter of an hour before he would have been highly amused; now this malicious woman had the same effect on him as another rock on a rough mountain trail. These endless civilities to which Madame de Chasteller was necessarily forced to respond, gave Lucien plenty of time to examine her at leisure. Madame de Chasteller's complexion had that inimitable freshness which seems to give evidence of a soul aloof from the petty vanities and little animosities of a provincial ball. Lucien was grateful to her for this, although the idea was pure invention on his part. He was absorbed in his admiration when the eyes of this pale beauty turned toward him; he could not endure their splendor; they were so altogether beautiful and simple in all their changing expressions! Without thinking, Lucien stood stock-still three paces from Madame de Chasteller, on the spot where her eyes had struck him.

All the sprightliness and brilliant effrontery of the man of fashion left him; he no longer thought of charming society, and if he remembered the existence of that monster at all, it was only to dread its tongue. Was it not this very society that was constantly talking to him about M. Thomas de Busant?

Instead of bolstering up his courage with action, he now succumbed to the weakness of meditating—philosophizing. To excuse the weakness and the misfortune of falling in love, he told himself that never before had he met with such celestial loveliness; he gave himself up to the pleasure of examining all this beauty, and his awkwardness increased accordingly.

Under his very nose, Madame de Chasteller promised M. d'Antin a quadrille, for which Lucien had been trying for the last half-hour to make up his mind to ask her. "Up till now," he reflected as he watched Madame de Chasteller being carried off, "the ridiculous affectations of all the pretty women I have met have served me as a shield against their charms. The coldness of Madame de Chasteller, the moment she speaks or makes a gesture, is transformed into a charm I should never have dreamed possible."

We must admit that while Lucien was indulging in these eulogistic reflections, standing motionless and stiff as a post, he looked like an idiot.

Madame de Chasteller had remarkably lovely hands. Since her eyes terrified him, our hero kept his own fastened on her hands, following them as she danced. His shyness had not been lost on Madame de Chasteller who had heard Lucien talked about daily by everyone who came to her house. Our second-lieutenant was at last roused from his happy state by the painful notion that everybody not engaged in dancing was looking at him with hostile eyes, bent on ridiculing him. His uniform and his cockade alone were enough to alienate, and violently, all persons at the ball who did not belong to the highest society. Lucien had long ago observed that in *ultraism* the less intelligent people were, the more rabid they became.

But all these prudent reflections were quickly forgotten; he found much too much pleasure puzzling over the character of Madame de Chasteller.

"How shameful!" suddenly objected the anti-love party, "how shameful in a man who has loved duty and the fatherland with a devotion that he can truthfully call sincere! He has eyes for nothing but the charms of a little provincial legitimist with a soul so base that it prefers the particular interests of her class to those of France."

"Soon," he said to himself, "I shall be putting the happiness of two hundred thousand nobles before that of thirty million Frenchmen. And the only excuse I could offer would be that these two hundred thousand privileged persons have elegant salons providing refined pleasures I should look for in vain elsewhere; in other words, salons that are necessary to my own private happiness. The vilest of Louis-Philippe's courtiers do not reason otherwise."

It was a cruel moment for Lucien, and his expression was far from gay as he tried his best to drive away these terrible thoughts. He was standing at the moment motionless near the quadrille in which Madame de Chasteller was dancing. Immediately the pro-love party, quick to confound reason, led him to invite Madame de Chasteller to dance. She looked at him, but this time Lucien was incapable of analyzing that look; it seemed to burn through him, to set him on fire. And yet, that look meant nothing more than a pleasurable curiosity at finding close at hand a young man everyone was talking about, who had such extreme passions, who fought a duel every day and who rode past her windows with remarkable frequency. And the splendid horse of this young officer always seemed to become skittish at the very moment when she happened to be at her window! It was plain that the horse's rider wished to appear very much taken with her, at least when he rode through the Rue de la Pompe, and she was not at all scandalized. She did not consider it an impertinence. It is true that when he had sat next to her at Madame

de Serpierre's dinner, he had seemed completely devoid of wit, his manner had even appeared to her crude. But he had, after all, rowed the boat on the *Lac de la Commanderie* with gallantry, but with the cold gallantry of a man of fifty.

The result of all these various ideas was that, while dancing with Lucien and without looking at him, without departing from the most decorous gravity, Madame de Chasteller was very much preoccupied with him. She had soon noticed that he was shy to the point of awkwardness.

"I suppose," she thought, "that it rankles his pride to remember that I saw him thrown off his horse the day his regiment arrived." Thus Madame de Chasteller found no objection to admitting that Lucien's timidity was due to her. This doubt of oneself had a certain charm in such a young man, especially in the midst of all these provincials so sure of their own importance and whose stature was not diminished in the least now as they danced. This young officer was at least not timid on horseback; every day she trembled at his temerity, a temerity that was frequently unfortunate, and she almost laughed aloud at the recollection.

Lucien was tortured by his own persistent silence. At last, making a prodigious effort, he found enough courage to address a few words to Madame de Chasteller, and succeeded only with the greatest difficulty in expressing very badly very commonplace ideas which is the just punishment for anyone who fails to exert his memory.

Madame de Chasteller avoided the invitations of several of the fashionable young men whose prettiest speeches she knew by heart, and after having succeeded in dancing in the same quadrille as Lucien, by one of those adroit feminine maneuvers that we understand only after we have no longer any interest in understanding them, she quickly came to the conclusion that his intelligence was really not distinguished, and

almost stopped thinking of him altogether. "He is nothing but a horseman like the others; only he rides more gracefully and makes a more interesting appearance." No longer was he that smart, high-spirited young man with an air of being indifferent and superior to everything, who so often rode past her window. Vexed by this discovery which seemed to increase for her the boredom of Nancy, Madame de Chasteller turned to Lucien and almost coquettishly began chatting with him. She had been watching him ride by for such a long time now that, although he had been presented only a week ago, he seemed to her almost like an old acquaintance.

Lucien only at intervals summoned up enough courage to look at the severely cold countenance of this lovely person talking to him, and was far from realizing all the friendly attention being lavished upon him. He danced, and in dancing made too many movements, and his movements were totally lacking in grace.

"Decidedly this fine young gentleman from Paris is at his best only on a horse; the moment his foot touches earth he loses half his merit, and when he starts dancing he loses the rest. He isn't intelligent; too bad, for his face seemed to promise such keenness and naturalness! It must be the *naturalness* that comes from a lack of ideas." And she began to breathe more freely. Yet by nature she was not ungenerous, but she loved her freedom, and she had been frightened.

Now altogether reassured as to Lucien's fatal fascination, and not inordinately affected by his single gift of horsemanship: "Like all the others," she said to herself, "this handsome young Parisian wants to play the lover overcome by my charms." And she thought of all those young men who flocked around her trying so hard to find amiable things to say. M. d'Antin occasionally succeeded. While granting M. d'Antin his due, Madame de Chasteller was annoyed that



Lucien, instead of saying a word, confined himself simply to smiling at M. d'Antin's gracious remarks. And to crown her displeasure, Lucien kept gazing at her in so marked a manner that it might very well have attracted attention.

Our poor hero was much too profoundly preoccupied, both with his remorse at being in love and an absolute inability to find one passable word to say, for him even to give a thought to controlling his eyes. Since he had left Paris he had seen nothing, from the moral point of view, that was not, so it seemed to him, distorted, dull and disagreeable. Duly weighing my words, I can assert that the base ambitions, the puerile pretentiousness, and above all the crude hypocrisy of the provinces, had succeeded in shocking a young man thoroughly injured to all the vices of Paris.

Quite forgetting his ironic and pessimistic pose for the past hour, Lucien had not had eyes enough for gazing, soul enough for admiring. His remorse at falling in love had been battered in breach and destroyed with delicious celerity. His youthful vanity reminded him from time to time that the continued silence in which he was happily basking, would do nothing to enhance his reputation for affability; but he was so amazed, so transported, that he had not the power to give any serious consideration to the effect he was producing.

In charming contrast to everything that had been offending his eyes for so long, there standing before him, not six paces away, was a woman whose heavenly beauty made her worthy of adoration; but that beauty was almost the least of her charms. In place of the assiduous, importunate, tiresome civilities of the lady of the house of de Serpierre, in place of that mania for being witty on all and every occasion, like Madame de Puylaurens, Madame de Chasteller was simple and cold, but with the kind of simplicity which is charming because it does not try to hide a soul made for the noblest

emotions, with that coldness which is so close to fire, and which seems ready to burst into tenderness and even into transports, had one the gift to inspire them.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MADAME DE CHASTELLER went to take a turn around the ballroom. Having resumed his post, M. de Blancet offered her his arm with an air of authority; one could see that he was anticipating the happiness of giving her his arm as her husband. As luck would have it, they came upon Lucien again in another part of the hall. Finding him there before her eyes once more, Madame de Chasteller felt a flash of impatience with herself. How could she have wasted a second glance on so commonplace a person, a man whose sublime virtue, like that of those heroes of Ariosto, consisted in being a good horseman! She engaged him in conversation, trying her best to make him talk.

Suddenly, listening to Madame de Chasteller, Lucien was transformed into another man. He believed that her noble glance which had deigned to fall on him absolved him from repeating all those commonplaces which bored him to say, which he said so badly, and which, in Nancy, still formed the staple of conversation between persons who had met for the eighth or tenth time. Suddenly he dared to talk, and to talk a great deal. He talked about everything that might interest or amuse this pretty woman who, still leaning on her tall cousin's arm, deigned to listen to him with a look of amazement in her eyes. Without losing in the least its tone of quiet and respectful courtesy, Lucien's voice grew clearer, took on a new resonance. At no loss for apt and amusing ideas, he

found lively and picturesque words in which to express them. Into this noble simplicity of tone which he spontaneously assumed, he was able to instill, without of course permitting himself anything that might shock the most scrupulous delicacy, that shade of delicate familiarity permissible between kindred souls when they meet and recognize each other in the midst of the masks of that ignoble masquerade known as society. Thus might two angels address each other if, having descended from heaven on some mission, they should meet here below. Indeed such noble simplicity is not without a certain kinship to the informality of speech permitted by long acquaintance. But in delicate reassurance each word seemed to say: "Bear with me for a moment; as soon as you wish to put on your mask again, we shall once more become complete strangers to one another—as is proper. Never fear that tomorrow I shall presume on this moment, but deign to enjoy yourself for an instant in all security."

In general women are terrified by conversations of this sort, but in practice never know how to stop them. For the man, apparently so overjoyed to talk to them, seems always to be saying: "Souls like ours should ignore considerations that were made for common mortals, and you surely feel as I do that . . ."

But for this unlooked-for eloquence, one should not fail to give due credit to Lucien's inexperience. It was through no effort of will that he had suddenly assumed a tone so favorable to his aspirations; he sincerely thought what this tone seemed to say, and thus, for reasons by no means flattering to his powers of diplomacy, his manner of expressing it was perfect. It was the illusion of a child-like heart. Lucien had always had a certain instinctive horror of all the base things that rose like a forbidding wall between himself and experience. He turned his eyes away from everything that seemed to him too ugly,

and at twenty-three was as naïve as any sixteen-year-old Parisian youth of good family would be ashamed of being in his last year of school. It was by pure chance that Lucien adopted the tone of a clever man of the world. He was certainly no expert in the art of winning a woman's heart and arousing her senses.

This tone, so singular, so attractive, so dangerous, was shocking, and practically unintelligible, only to M. de Blancet who, nonetheless, insisted on putting in a word now and then. Lucien had taken possession of all Madame de Chasteller's attention as though it were his due. Terrified though she was, she could not help thoroughly approving Lucien's ideas and sometimes replying to them in almost the same tone; but finally, without precisely ceasing to listen with pleasure, she fell into a brown study.

To justify her involuntary smiles of approbation in her own mind, she said to herself: "He talks about everything happening here at the ball and not a word about himself." But the very fact of his daring to talk to her in this manner, even about unimportant things, was in itself a way of speaking of himself and of putting himself on a footing that was by no means negligible in the eyes of a woman of her age, and one accustomed, as she was, to so much reserve: such a footing would have been nothing less than unique.

At first Madame de Chasteller was amazed and amused by the transformation she was witnessing, but not for long. Soon she ceased to smile. Now it was her turn to be afraid. "In what a way he dares to talk to me, and I am not in the least shocked! I do not feel in the least offended! Heavens! he is not by any means just another nice, simple young man . . . what an idiot I was to think so! On the contrary I am confronted with one of those clever, attractive, and profoundly insidious men, such as one meets in novels. They know

how to make themselves attractive precisely because they are incapable of loving. There he stands before me, happy and gay, occupied in assuming a role—certainly a most pleasing one—but he is happy only because he feels that he is talking so well. . . . Apparently he decided to start his conquest by appearing completely dazzled for an hour, even to the point of being stupid. But I shall certainly find a way of breaking off all relations with such a dangerous, such an accomplished actor.”

But even as she was making this sage reflection, formulating this magnificent resolution, her heart was already involved. From this moment may be reckoned the birth of a particular sentiment for Lucien, setting him apart. All at once Madame de Chasteller was struck with remorse at having remained there so long talking to Lucien, away from all the other women, and having as chaperon only the worthy M. de Blancet who, in all probability, did not understand a word of all he was hearing. To extricate herself from this embarrassing situation, she accepted Lucien’s request that she should dance with him in the quadrille.

After the quadrille and during the waltz that followed, Madame d’Hocquincourt called out to Madame de Chasteller to come and sit beside her in a corner where there was a little more air and some relief from the increasing heat of the ballroom.

Lucien, who was on the friendliest terms with Madame d’Hocquincourt, remained with the two ladies. There Madame de Chasteller could see for herself that he was the rage that evening. “And it really isn’t surprising,” she thought, “for in addition to the handsome uniform, which he wears so well, he is always the center of mirth and gaiety wherever he happens to be.”

The guests were now beginning to drift toward a tent

nearby where supper was being served. Lucien managed it so that he could offer Madame de Chasteller his arm. It seemed to her that whole days must have intervened between her present feelings and her state of mind at the beginning of the evening. She had almost entirely forgotten the boredom that had fairly extinguished her voice after the first hour spent at the ball.

It was midnight; the supper had been laid out in a charming open-air hall formed by the walls of hedges twelve to fifteen feet high. Over these verdant walls a tent roof with broad red and white stripes sheltered the guests from a possible heavy fall of dew. These were the colors of the exiled personage whose birthday was being celebrated. Here and there, through the leaves of this living wall, could be seen a lovely moon lighting up a wide and peaceful landscape. This ravishing scene of nature was in tune with the new emotions struggling for the possession of Madame de Chasteller's heart, and was, in part, responsible for putting off and weakening the protests of her reason. Lucien did not take his place next to Madame de Chasteller (one had to have a certain regard for the old friends of his new acquaintance, as a look, more friendly than he would ever have dared hope for, had warned him), but where he could both see and hear her perfectly.

He had the happy idea of expressing his real feelings by means of remarks apparently intended for the ladies sitting near him. This necessitated his talking a great deal, yet, without saying too many preposterous things, he was successful. He soon dominated the conversation; and while greatly entertaining the ladies around Madame de Chasteller, he began audaciously expressing things that could have an infinitely tender implication, something he would otherwise never have dreamed of attempting so soon. He knew that Madame de Chasteller could very well pretend, if she chose, not to understand these words addressed to her indirectly. Lucien even

succeeded in entertaining the men who stood behind the ladies, for they did not yet view his success with out and out envy.

Everyone was talking, and there was a great deal of laughter at Madame de Chasteller's end of the table. People at the other end fell silent hoping to have some part in all the merriment centered around her. Madame de Chasteller was doubly occupied, both with what she heard, which often made her laugh, and with those very serious reflections forming such a strange contrast to the gay and festive tone of the evening.

"So this is that timid fellow whom I thought devoid of ideas? What a terrifying creature!" It was perhaps the first time in his life that Lucien had been witty, brilliantly witty. Toward the end of the supper he noticed that his success went beyond anything he could have dreamed of. He was happy, extremely animated, and yet, by some miracle, he said nothing that was offensive, in spite of the fact that here among the proud families of Lorraine, he was hemmed in by three or four fierce prejudices of which Paris had but the palest copies: fanatical belief in Henri V and the Nobility, and a duplicity and stupidity toward the lower orders which amounted to a veritable crime against humanity. None of these great verities, the foundation head of the credo of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, received the slightest wound from Lucien's gaiety.

It was because his generous heart had, in fact, infinite sympathy for the situation of these poor young gentlemen around him. Four years ago, out of loyalty to their political beliefs and ideas of a lifetime, they had deprived themselves of a small portion of the budget, useful if not absolutely necessary to their subsistence. They had lost even more: the only occupation in the world that could save them from boredom, the only one, they were convinced, that did not dishonor them.

The ladies decided that Lucien was *eminently correct*. Ma-

dame de Commercy it was who pronounced the sanctifying word in that corner of the ballroom reserved for the highest nobility. For there was a little group of seven or eight ladies who despised the rest of this society, which, in turn, despised the rest of the city, very much as Napoleon's Imperial Guard would, in case of a revolt, have terrified that army of 1812 which itself was the terror of Europe.

At this conclusive word of Madame de Commercy, the gilded youth of Nancy almost revolted. These young gentlemen, so adept in how to be elegant and how to appear to advantage at the entrance of a café, were usually silent at balls, content to reveal their prowess simply as lusty and indefatigable dancers. When they saw Lucien talking volubly, contrary to his habit, and noticed, moreover, that he was listened to, they began saying that he was very noisy and quite insufferable; that such loud amiability might be the fashion in *bourgeois* circles in Paris and in the back parlors of the shops of the Rue Saint-Honoré, but would certainly never succeed with good society in Nancy.

While these gentlemen thus declared themselves, Lucien's witty remarks were succeeding admirably and giving them the lie. They were reduced to repeating to one another with a lugubriously self-satisfied air: "After all, he is only a bourgeois, born nobody knows where, and the only nobility he can hope to enjoy is that conferred by his epaulets."

This remark of the resigned officers of Lorraine sums up the great quarrel that afflicts the Nineteenth Century: the resentment of rank against merit.

But none of the ladies gave a thought to such melancholy ideas; they had completely escaped, for the moment, from the sad civilization that so weighs on the male mind in the provinces. The supper finished brilliantly with champagne; and without ill effect this wine brought greater gaiety and freedom to everyone's manners. As for our hero, he was elevated



by the tenderest sentiments which, disguised by the mask of gaiety, he had the temerity to address to the lady of his thoughts. It was the first time in his life that success had thrown him into such a state of intoxication.

Returning to the ballroom, M. de Blancet danced a waltz with Madame de Chasteller, and was succeeded after a few turns by Lucien, in accordance with the German custom. During the dance, with a skill that was not skill but the offspring of chance and passion, Lucien was able to resume their conversation in a tone which, although altogether respectful, was, nevertheless, in more ways than one, that of an old acquaintance.

Taking advantage of a grand cotillion, which neither Madame de Chasteller nor Lucien cared to dance, he was able to say to her, laughing and without its being too out of keeping with the general tone of their colloquy: "All for the sake of getting nearer to your beautiful eyes I bought a missal, I fought a duel, and I cultivated the acquaintance of Dr. Du Poirier." Madame de Chasteller's face grew very pale at that moment, and her startled eyes expressed profound surprise, and almost fright. At the name of Du Poirier she replied in a low voice and as though loath to pronounce the words: "He is a dangerous man!"

Lucien was mad with joy, for Madame de Chasteller had showed no anger at the motives he gave for his conduct in Nancy. But he hardly dared believe what seemed evident.

A silence of two or three seconds followed, pregnant with meaning; Lucien fixed his eyes on those of Madame de Chasteller, until at last he dared to say:

"He is admirable from my point of view; if it had not been for him, I should not be here tonight. . . . But," he added, with all his imprudent artlessness, "I have a terrible suspicion."

"What? What is it?" asked Madame de Chasteller.

She felt right away that so direct, so impulsive a response on her part was a hopeless indiscretion; but she had spoken without thinking. She blushed deeply. Lucien was very much moved to see the crimson flush spreading even over her shoulders.

But, as it happened, Lucien could not reply to Madame de Chasteller's simple question. "What will she think of me?" he said to himself. Instantly his expression changed; he paled as though struck by some sudden malady; his features betrayed the terrible pain caused by the thought of M. de Busant de Sicile which, having left him for several hours, now suddenly returned.

That was it! What he had obtained was only a favor conferred on a uniform no matter who wore it! His thirst for the truth, coupled with the impossibility of finding admissible words to express such an odious idea, threw him into a profound embarrassment. "One word and I am lost forever!"

The unlooked-for emotion that seemed to have chilled Lucien, was in an instant communicated to Madame de Chasteller. She turned pale seeing the cruel suffering, no doubt related in some way to her, that had so suddenly appeared on Lucien's open and youthful countenance: his features seemed to have shrunk; his eyes, so brilliant before, now appeared dull and sightless.

There was an exchange of one or two insignificant words.

"But what is the matter?" said Madame de Chasteller.

"I don't know," Lucien replied mechanically.

"But, how can you say, you don't know?"

"No, Madam . . . My respect for you . . ."

Can the reader ever believe that Madame de Chasteller, more and more perturbed, was imprudent enough to add:

"Has this suspicion anything to do with me?"

"Would I have hesitated the fraction of a second?" cried Lucien with all the ardor of a first sorrow keenly felt. "Would

I have hesitated had it had nothing to do with you, with nobody but you in the whole world? Whom else could I think of but you? And hasn't this suspicion stabbed me through the heart a hundred times a day ever since I came to Nancy?"

Nothing more was needed to stimulate Madame de Chasteller's growing interest than to have her honor called in question. It did not occur to her to hide her astonishment at the tone of Lucien's reply. The fervor with which he had just spoken to her, the evidence of the extreme sincerity in this young man's words, all at once changed her pallor to an imprudent blush. Even her eyes blushed! But dare I admit in such a prudish age which seems to have contracted a marriage with hypocrisy, that it was with happiness that Madame de Chasteller first blushed and not because of what the dancers might be thinking about her as they passed back and forth in front of them through the figures of the cotillion.

She might decide to respond, or not to respond, to his love; but how sincere it was! with what devotion she was loved! "Perhaps, even most probably, this infatuation will not last," she said to herself. "But how real it is! No ranting, no flowery phrases! Surely this is true passion; surely this is the way it would be sweet to be loved. But that his suspicion should be such as to arrest his love . . . why, the implication is infamous!"

Madame de Chasteller remained pensive, her head resting on her fan. From time to time, her eyes turned toward Lucien who was standing as still and pale as a ghost, intent upon her alone. Lucien's eyes were indiscreet to a degree that would have made her tremble had she still had her wits about her.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

**A**NOTHER much more perturbing thought now came to agitate her heart. "At the beginning of the evening it was not any lack of ideas that kept him from talking, as, in my innocence, I had imagined. Could it have been because of that suspicion, that horrible suspicion which made him falter in his esteem for me? . . . Suspicion of what? What calumny black enough to produce such an effect in anyone so young and so good?"

Despite her seeming calm, Madame de Chasteller was so overwrought that without thinking of the temerity of what she was saying, and still under the influence of the gay tone of the conversation at supper, she let this strange question escape her:

"But why is it . . . at the beginning of the evening you found only the most insignificant things to say to me? Was it your exaggerated sense of politeness? Was it . . . the reserve so natural between two people who hardly know each other?" (Here she lowered her voice in spite of herself.) "Or was it," she finally added, "the effect of that suspicion?" And her voice at these last two words suddenly resumed a tone of restraint without losing any of its intensity.

"It was because of my extreme shyness: I have no experience of life, I had never been in love before; your eyes, when I saw them so close, terrified me."

This was said with such an accent of sincerity, with such tender intimacy, with such real love that, before she could think, Madame de Chasteller's eyes—those eyes whose ex-

pression was so profound, so sincere—had replied for her: "I, too, am in love."

After half a second, as though coming out of a trance, she turned her eyes away, but not before Lucien's had garnered the full force of that telltale look.

He flushed almost absurdly red. He hardly dared believe the extent of his good fortune. Madame de Chasteller, for her part, felt that her cheeks were on fire. "My God! I am compromising myself in the most frightful way. All eyes are turned on this stranger with whom I have been talking so long, and with such a show of interest!"

She beckoned to M. de Blancet who was dancing in the cotillion.

"Take me to the terrace in the garden. I have been feeling ill from the heat for the last five minutes, I am suffocating. I drank half a glass of champagne at supper, and I really believe I am intoxicated."

But what was frightful for Madame de Chasteller was that instead of adopting a sympathetic tone, M. de Blancet only sneered derisively as he listened to these lies. He was mad with jealousy at the air of intimacy, of pleasure, with which she had been listening to Lucien for so long and, moreover, he had been warned in his regiment never to credit the indispositions of lovely ladies.

He offered her his arm and was escorting her out of the ballroom when another equally luminous idea occurred to him. Madame de Chasteller seemed to be leaning heavily on his arm with a really singular abandon.

"Does my lovely cousin wish me to understand that she reciprocates at last, or that she has, at least, a certain feeling of tenderness for me?" M. de Blancet asked himself. But trying to recall all the little incidents of the evening, he could find nothing that seemed to presage such a happy change. Was it a sudden impulse, or was it willful dissimulation on her

part? He led her to the other side of some flower-beds where he discovered a marble table placed in front of a garden chair with back and foot rest. He had some difficulty in getting Madame de Chasteller comfortably seated, for she seemed almost incapable of movement.

While M. de Blancet, instead of seeing what was happening under his own nose, was engaged with these chimerical fancies, Madame de Chasteller was reduced to utter despair. "My conduct is shocking!" she said to herself. "I have compromised myself in the eyes of all those women, and at this moment I am the subject of the most unflattering and humiliating remarks. I have behaved, for I don't know how long, as though no one were looking at me, or at M. Leuwen. Nancy society will never overlook anything as far as I am concerned. . . . And M. Leuwen?" This name, as she said it to herself, made her tremble. "And I have compromised myself in the eyes of M. Leuwen!"

That was the real cause of her wretchedness. And it found no relief in any of the thoughts that came crowding in upon her as she reviewed all that had happened that evening.

Soon another suspicion came to add to her unhappiness. "If M. Leuwen acts with such assurance it must be because he knows that I spend whole hours hidden behind the shutters at my window, waiting for him to ride past."

We hope our reader will not think Madame de Chasteller too absurd. Inexperienced as she was, she had no idea of all the pitfalls into which a loving heart may lead one; never had she felt anything to resemble what had been happening to her during this painful evening. She could not find an idea in her head to come to her rescue, and had no real experience to help her. The strongest emotions that had, up till now, troubled her equanimity had been the slight timidity she felt when being presented to a great princess, or profound indignation against the Jacobins who were trying to undermine the

throne of the Bourbons. Over and above these theories which were largely sentimental and only succeeded in touching her heart for an instant, Madame de Chasteller had an earnest and tender nature, which at this moment could only be expected to add to her unhappiness. Unfortunately the little daily interests of life did not touch her. Thus she had always lived in false security. For natures that have the misfortune of being above the trifles which form the chief occupation of the majority of human beings are all the more disposed to think exclusively of the things that have once succeeded in really touching them.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

TO CROWN her misery, and as a result of that *savoir-vivre* which makes a sojourn in the provinces so agreeable, several women, who were certainly not very intimate friends of Madame de Chasteller, promptly left the ballroom and together invaded the terrace, crowding around the marble table. Several had brought candles. Each one of them chirped something about her friendship and her eagerness to do something for her *dear* Madame de Chasteller. M. de Blancet had not had enough backbone to safeguard the entrance of her garden retreat and to prevent this intrusion.

The accumulation of worry and unhappiness, aided by this abominable uproar, was about to drive Madame de Chasteller into a fit of hysterics in good earnest.

"Let's see now," these kind friends were thinking, "just how this woman, so proud of her wealth and with all her haughty airs, behaves when she is in such a state."

Hearing them approach, Madame de Chasteller had said to herself:

"Whatever I do, I am sure to be guilty of some horrible new blunder." She decided to keep her eyes closed and not to reply.

Madame de Chasteller could find no excuse for her self-styled obliquities. She was as miserable as anyone could possibly be in life's most trying moments. If the unhappiness of tender souls does not at such times reach the maximum of their endurance, it is perhaps because the necessity of action prevents the soul from being wholly absorbed by the contemplation of its misfortune.

Lucien was dying to follow the indiscreet ladies out to the terrace; but he had hardly taken a step in that direction before he was horrified by this grossly selfish impulse and to avoid all temptation he left the ball, but with lingering steps. He regretted missing the end of the evening. He was amazed, and, at the bottom of his heart, worried. He had no idea of the extent of his victory. He felt an instinctive urge to review, and to weigh, with all the calm of reason, the events that had happened with such rapidity. He was in need of reflection, of deciding what he *ought* to think.

His heart, still so young, was dazed by these concerns of great moment, which he had treated as if they had been mere trifles. He could see nothing clearly. While the skirmish lasted, he had probably never allowed himself to stop for an instant to think, fearing to let the least opportunity for action escape him. Now in retrospect he saw that things of the utmost importance had been happening. He did not dare give himself up to the visions of happiness he vaguely glimpsed, and he trembled suddenly as he reviewed the events, recalling some word, some act that might separate him forever from Madame de Chasteller. As for his remorse at being in love with her, there was now no longer any question of it.



Dr. Du Poirier, who, shrewd man that he was, never neglected small opportunities while giving serious attention to large ones, now fearing that some young doctor, a good dancer as well, might make the most of Madame de Chasteller's indisposition, soon appeared in front of the marble table which still afforded Madame de Chasteller some slight protection against the zeal of her loving friends. With her eyes closed and head resting on her hands, motionless and silent, surrounded by twenty candles that curiosity had assembled, Madame de Chasteller was now the center of attack from a group of twelve or fifteen women all talking at once of their friendship for her and of the best remedies for fainting fits.

Since Du Poirier had no interest in saying the contrary, he told them the simple truth, that what Madame de Chasteller needed, above all, was calm and silence.

"Ladies, please be good enough to return to the ballroom. Leave Madame de Chasteller alone with her doctor and with M. de Blancet. We shall take her home just as quickly as possible."

Hearing the doctor give this order, the poor afflicted soul was profoundly grateful.

"I'll see to everything!" cried M. de Blancet who always came off with flying colors on those all too rare occasions when physical energy takes precedence over everything else. He was gone like a flash, in less than five minutes had reached the Hôtel de Pontlevé at the other end of the town, had the horses in harness, had indeed harnessed them with his own hands, and soon Madame de Chasteller's carriage, driven by M. de Blancet himself, could be heard clattering up at a gallop.

Safe in her own apartment at last, Madame de Chasteller had presence of mind enough to dismiss her maid who hoped for nothing so much as a full account of her mistress's mishap. Madame de Chasteller thought bitterly of her dear friend Madame de Constantin whom M. de Pontlevé's calculated

politeness had succeeded in keeping away. Madame de Chasteller dared write in the letters entrusted to the post only the vaguest assurances of affection, having reason to believe that her father had all her letters shown to him. The postmistress of Nancy *thought right*, and M. de Pontlevé was the head of a sort of commission established in the name of Charles X for Lorraine, Alsace, and Franche-Comté.

"And so I am alone, utterly alone in the world with my shame," Madame de Chasteller said to herself.

She wept without restraint in the silence and secrecy of a great open window from which, two leagues away toward the east, could be seen the somber mass of the Burelviller woods, and overhead a dark, cloudless sky strewn with twinkling stars. At last she grew calmer, and summoned the courage to call her maid and to dismiss her for the night. Until then the presence of any human being would have painfully intensified her shame and distress. As soon as she heard the maid climbing the stairs to her own room, bravely she forced herself to turn her mind to an examination of all her hideous errors of that fatal evening.

At first her distress and confusion were extreme. It seemed to her that no matter where she turned she discovered some new reason for despising herself, and a boundless humiliation. What shocked her most of all was that suspicion which Lucien had dared to mention. To think that a man, a young man, should permit himself such a liberty! Lucien seemed to be well-bred. Then it must be that she had given him extraordinary encouragement. What had she done? She could remember nothing except that sort of pity and disappointment she had felt at the beginning of the evening because of the singular lack of ideas displayed by a young man she found attractive. "And to think I took him merely for a very *accomplished* horseman like my cousin, Blancet!"

But what could have been that suspicion he spoke of?

This was her worst torment. She wept for a long time. Her tears were the honorable amends she made herself.

"Well, let him have all the suspicions he likes," cried Madame de Chasteller. "It must be some calumny he has heard. If he believes it, so much the worse for him; it only proves that he has very little intelligence or discernment! I am innocent!"

This display of pride was sincere. Little by little she ceased to wonder what that suspicion might be. Her real faults seemed to her at that moment even more unbearable and innumerable. And she wept again. At last, after all the anguish of extremest bitterness, weak and half-dead from grief, it seemed to her that she could clearly distinguish two things for which she must blame herself in particular: first she had let that contemptible and stupidly malicious audience which she despised, catch a glimpse of what was happening in her heart. She felt her unhappiness redoubled as she thought of all the many reasons she had to dread its cruelty and to despise it. All those gentlemen on their knees before wealth, or at the least show of favor from the King or from a minister, how pitiless they are toward any fault not derived from the love of money! Thinking of all her scorn for this high society of Nancy in whose eyes she had compromised herself, she felt a pain, a *detailed* pain, if I may be permitted the expression, that burned like a red-hot iron. She imagined all the glances cast her way by the women who had danced past her in the cotillion, imagined all their scorn.

After having wantonly exposed herself to the stings of this pain, Madame de Chasteller reverted to a much deeper grief, the thought of which seemed, in a flash, to divest her of all her courage. It was her own condemnation for having violated, in the eyes of Lucien, that feminine reserve without which a woman cannot hope to enjoy the esteem of a man who is himself worthy of esteem. Faced by the chief article of

her indictment, she felt something like a respite from her suffering. She even brought herself to say, and aloud, in a voice half-strangled by sobs:

*"And if he didn't despise me, it is I who would despise him! Can it be possible,"* she cried after a moment of silence, and as though yielding to her rage against herself, "a man entertains doubts about my conduct, and far from turning away, I seem to want to justify myself. And as though this indignity were not enough, I make a spectacle of myself, I lay my heart bare to those vile creatures who, whenever I stop to think of them seriously, make me sick for days at a time; and then, in the end, my imprudent eyes give M. Leuwen the right to place me among those women who throw themselves at the head of the first man who pleases them. For why shouldn't he have the insolence of his age? Hasn't he every justification?"

And she soon denied herself the delight of thinking of Lucien, to revert to those terrible words: *who throw themselves at the head of the first man who comes along.*

"But M. Leuwen is right," she continued with savage courage. "I see clearly enough myself that I am a dissolute woman. I did not love him before this fatal night; I thought of him only in a perfectly rational way, and as a young man who seemed to be a little above the usual run of gentlemen whom chance sends our way. He speaks to me for an instant, I think him frightfully shy, and a stupid arrogance makes me trifle with him as someone of no consequence; it amuses me to try to force him to talk; and then, all at once, I find myself thinking of nothing but him. It was evidently simply because I found him handsome. Could the most depraved woman have acted any worse?"

This new access of despair was more violent than all the others. At last, as the white light of dawn paled the sky above the black woods of Burelviller, exhaustion and sleep came

to suspend for a little while Madame de Chasteller's remorse and sorrow.

During this same night, Lucien thought of her ceaselessly, and with a feeling of adoration that was indeed very flattering. What a consolation could she only have witnessed all the timidity of this young man who seemed to her like the most terrible and accomplished Don Juan! Lucien could not make up his mind what to think of the events of this decisive evening. He could not help trembling as he pronounced the word "decisive." He believed that he had read in her eyes the promise that one day she would love him.

"But, Great God! have I no other merit in the eyes of this angelic creature than to be an exception to the rule which makes her prefer lieutenant-colonels! Great God! How can such behavior, apparently so vulgar, be reconciled with all the appearances of a noble soul? I can see that heaven has not given me the gift of understanding the heart of woman. Dévelroy was right: I shall be a simpleton all my life, always more amazed at my own heart than at all that is happening to me. This heart of mine, which should be wild with happiness, is, quite the contrary, in deep distress. Ah! If only I could see her! I should ask her advice; the soul that spoke from those eyes would understand my suffering; to vulgar souls it would seem too ridiculous. What! I win a hundred francs in a lottery and I am in despair because I did not win a million! I devote all my attention to the prettiest woman of the city in which I happen to find myself. First weakness: I try to resist her. I am beaten. And now here I am trying to do everything to please her, just like any of those poor ineffectual little nobodies who clutter up the salons of Paris. Finally, the woman, with whom I have the signal weakness of being in love, seems to receive my advances with pleasure and a coquetry which is, at least in its manner, adorable. She plays her role as though she guessed that the passion

I am weak enough to entertain for her is serious. Instead of enjoying my good fortune, not so bad after all, I spoil it by indulging in false delicacy. I torture myself because the heart of a lady of the Court has been stirred by others before me! But, great God, have I the art to win the heart of a truly virtuous woman? Every time I have aspired to a woman a little better than the common run of grisettes, haven't I always failed in the most ridiculous fashion? Hasn't Ernest, who, after all, possesses intelligence despite all his pedantry, explained to me how totally lacking I am in sang-froid? With my choir-boy face everybody knows exactly what I am thinking. . . . Instead of taking advantage of my little conquests and forging ahead, I stand stock-still like a donkey, rolling them around on my tongue with relish. For me the pressure of a hand is a city of Capua; instead of advancing I stand in ecstasy over the rare delights of so decided a favor. In short, I have no talent for this sort of warfare, and I have the temerity to be exacting! Poor idiot, if you please her it is quite by chance, pure chance. . . ."

After pacing up and down his room a hundred times:

"I love her," he said aloud, "or at least I want her to love me. I have even an idea that she *is* in love with me. And yet I am miserable. I could certainly pose for the portrait of the perfect fool. Apparently, in my plans for winning her, I should first of all require her not to love me! Wonderful! I want her to love me and I am miserable because she seems to have taken a fancy to me! When one is an idiot, one should at least try not to be a coward as well."

At daybreak he fell asleep with this lovely thought, and with half a mind to ask Colonel Malher to have him transferred to N—, twenty leagues from Nancy where a detachment of his regiment was engaged in keeping an eye on the Mutualist workers.

How it would have added to the torture of poor Madame

de Chasteller, who, almost at the same hour, had succumbed to fatigue at last, had she been aware of the seeming contempt which, twisted and turned in every sense, looked at from every angle, was keeping awake the man who, in spite of herself, was uppermost in her own thoughts!

## CHAPTER TWENTY

WHATEVER LUCIEN'S THOUGHTS may have been, he was not master of his actions. Early next morning, having donned his uniform and started out to present himself to Colonel Malher, he passed within sight of Madame de Chasteller's street. He could not resist the desire to have another glimpse of those windows with the parrot-green shutters which, if the Colonel granted his request, he might never see again. He had hardly turned into the street than his heart began pounding so that he could scarcely breathe: the mere idea that he might catch sight of Madame de Chasteller almost drove him out of his mind. It was even a relief not to find her at her window.

"And what would become of me," he asked himself, "if after obtaining permission to leave Nancy, I should long just as madly to return? Since last night I am no longer master of myself, I follow every idea that suddenly strikes me and that a second before I'd never thought of."

After this bit of reasoning worthy of a student of the École Polytechnique, Lucien mounted his horse and did five or six leagues in two hours. He was running away from himself. Morally he suffered all the anguish of physical thirst in the urgent need he felt of submitting his own to another man's judgment, of asking advice. He had just enough reason left

to believe and to feel that he was going mad; yet his entire happiness depended on the opinion he should finally form of Madame de Chasteller.

He had had the good sense not to go beyond the bounds of the most circumspect reserve with the officers of his regiment. So he had no one near him to encourage him, he had not even the expedient of the vaguest, most remote opinion. M. Gauthier was away, and, besides, Lucien felt sure, would not have understood his folly except to upbraid him and advise him to go away.

Returning from his ride, and passing once more through the Rue de la Pompe, he had an access of madness that astonished him. It seemed to him that if he were to encounter Madame de Chasteller's eyes at that moment, he would fall off his horse for the third time. He felt that he lacked the courage to leave Nancy, and he did not go to see Colonel Malher.

M. Gauthier returned from the country that same evening. Lucien attempted to speak to him of his situation in veiled terms, trying him out, as they say. And, after a few conventional phrases, this is what Gauthier said:

"I too have my worries. Those workers of N—— have me bothered. What will the army have to say? . . ."

The very day after the ball Doctor Du Poirier came to pay his young friend a long call, and without preamble began talking about Madame de Chasteller. Lucien felt himself blushing to the whites of his eyes. He opened the window and stood in the shadow of the blinds so that the doctor could not see his face clearly.

"That old duffer has come here to cross-examine me. We'll see about that!"

Lucien launched forth in praise of the beauty of the pavilion



where the dancing had taken place the night before. From the courtyard he proceeded to the magnificent stairway and the vases of exotic plants with which they had been decorated; then, in mathematical and logical order, from the stairway he passed on to the antechamber, thence to the first two drawing rooms. . . .

The doctor soon broke in, turning the conversation to the subject of Madame de Chasteller's indisposition, and speculating on what might have been the cause. Lucien was careful not to interrupt him. Each word was a treasure, for the doctor had just come from the Hôtel de Pontlevé. However, Lucien succeeded in keeping himself well in hand; at the slightest pause he gravely resumed his dissertation on the probable cost of those elegant tents with crimson and white stripes. The sound of these words, that fell so strangely from his lips, seemed to increase his coolness and perfect self-possession. Never had he had more need of them: the doctor, who wanted at any cost to make him talk, told him priceless things about Madame de Chasteller, things about which Lucien would have paid any price to hear more. And the situation was tempting: he felt that with a little adroit flattery the doctor could be led to betray any secret in the world. But Lucien was cautious to the point of diffidence. He never pronounced the name of Madame de Chasteller except in replying to the doctor; to do so at any other moment would have been a serious blunder.

Lucien overplayed his part, but, not being accustomed to people who replied to exactly what was said, Du Poirier failed to notice. Lucien made up his mind to be ill the next day; he hoped to find out from the doctor many more details about M. de Pontlevé and the daily life of Madame de Chasteller.

The following day the doctor had changed his tactics. Madame de Chasteller, according to him, was a prude, imbued

with an insufferable pride, much less rich than people said. She had, at most, an income of ten thousand francs. But, in spite of all the doctor's barely disguised spite toward Madame de Chasteller, he did not even mention M. Thomas de Busant de Sicile, lieutenant-colonel of Hussars. This was a precious moment for Lucien. Almost as precious as that moment the night before when Madame de Chasteller had looked at him after asking if his suspicion had anything to do with her! And so there had been no scandal connected with her affair with M. Thomas de Busant!

Lucien paid many calls that evening, but said not a word beyond making the most conventional inquiries on the state of everyone's health after such an extraordinarily exhausting ball.

"What a boon to these bored provincials the spectacle of my real preoccupation would be—if they only knew!"

Everybody criticized Madame de Chasteller with the exception of the good Théodelinde; but then Théodelinde was quite ugly and Madame de Chasteller extremely pretty. Lucien felt for Théodelinde an affection that almost amounted to love.

"Madame de Chasteller fails to share these people's taste in the matter of amusement," she observed. "That is something that is forgiven nowhere. Such differences are unknown in Paris."

During his last calls Lucien, certain now of not meeting Madame de Chasteller who, it was said, was still indisposed, thought how pleasant it would be to see those little embroidered muslin curtains lighted by her candles.

"I am a coward," he finally decided. "Very well! I shall give in to my cowardice and enjoy it."

And if you must be damned, at least  
Be damned for pleasant sins!

These were perhaps his last sighs of remorse at being in love, and over his lost love for his poor betrayed fatherland. One cannot have two loves at the same time.

"I am a coward," he said to himself as he left Madame d'Hocquincourt's drawing room. Since in Nancy the street-lights were extinguished at ten-thirty by order of the Mayor, and since, with the exception of the nobility, everybody then went to bed, he could, without being too ridiculous in his *own* eyes, pace back and forth under the parrot-green shutters, although almost immediately after his arrival the lights had gone out in the little room. Embarrassed by the sound of his own footsteps, Lucien took advantage of the profound darkness and settled himself for a long time on a large stone directly across the street from the window, from which he never once took his eyes.

His was not the only heart to be disturbed by the sound of his footsteps. Until ten o'clock Madame de Chasteller had spent an evening haunted by somber thoughts and filled with remorse. She would have been less melancholy in company, but she was afraid to risk meeting Lucien or hearing his name mentioned. At ten-thirty, seeing him appear, her deep and lonely sadness was all at once interrupted by the pounding of her heart. She hastened to blow out her candles, but, in spite of all her remonstrances with herself, did not leave the window. Her eyes were guided in the darkness by the tip of Lucien's little cigar. Lucien had finally triumphed over the last vestige of remorse.

"All right—I shall love her and despise her," he said to himself. "And after she loves me I shall say to her: 'Ah, if only your soul had been pure, I should have cherished you for the rest of my life!'"

The next day, wakened at five o'clock for drill, Lucien felt a passionate desire to see Madame de Chasteller. He now felt sure of her heart.

"One look told me everything!" he repeated when common sense tried to raise some objection. "But I would to God she were more difficult to please! I should not complain."

Finally, five days after the ball, which seemed like five weeks to Lucien, he met Madame de Chasteller at the Comtesse de Commercy's. Madame de Chasteller was ravishing. Her natural pallor had vanished as she heard the lackey announcing: *M. Leuwen*. As for Lucien, he could hardly breathe. But Madame de Chasteller's costume seemed to him far too elegant, too gay, too sophisticated. Madame de Chasteller was indeed exquisitely dressed in a style that Paris would have approved.

"Why should she go to so much trouble simply to pay a call on an old lady?" he said to himself. "It is a little too suggestive of her weakness for lieutenant-colonels!"

But in spite of his bitter disapproval he added:

"Very well then, I shall love her—but not seriously."

While he was making this good resolution, he was not three steps away from her and trembling like a leaf, but with happiness.

At this moment, Lucien made a polite inquiry about her indisposition; Madame de Chasteller replied with the greatest courtesy, and in a charming tone of voice but, at the same time, with a composure that was all the more convincing since it was neither serious nor sad but, on the contrary, affable almost to the point of gaiety. Completely disconcerted, Lucien did not realize the full extent of the misfortune this tone seemed to presage until after he had left, and had had time to think it over. As for his own manner, it was as dull and stupid as possible. Perfectly aware of this, he made a great effort to give a little grace to his gestures and voice—with what success may well be imagined!

"Here I am displaying exactly the same degree of idiocy as during the first moments of our conversation at the ball . . ." he thought, passing judgment on himself. And he was right,

he in no way exaggerated his lack of charm and wit. But what he did not know was that the only person in whose eyes he longed not to appear an idiot, had judged his embarrassment quite differently.

"M. Leuwen," thought Madame de Chasteller, "was expecting the natural sequel to my inconceivably frivolous behavior at the ball, or at least he had a right to hope for an agreeable, even an affectionate manner, recalling that friendly tone. He meets instead with an extremely courteous manner, but one which actually implies that he is even less to me than a simple acquaintance."

In order to say something, and not finding an idea in his head, Lucien suddenly decided to expatiate upon the talents of Madame Malibran who was then singing at Metz, and whom all Nancy society had announced its intention of going to hear. Madame de Chasteller, delighted not to have to struggle to find words both polite enough and, at the same time, cold enough, silently watched him as he talked. Soon he was floundering hopelessly, and so ridiculous in his confusion that even Madame de Commercy noticed it.

"The accomplishments of these fashionable young men are remarkably subject to change," she murmured to Madame de Chasteller. "He has not the slightest resemblance to the charming young second-lieutenant who often calls on me."

This remark was a joy to Madame de Chasteller: a sensible woman, famous in the city for her good sense and cool judgment, had just confirmed what she herself had been thinking, and with what pleasure!

"How different from that man I saw at the ball—so merry, so quick, so sparkling with wit, embarrassed only by the overabundance and vivacity of his ideas! And here he is trying to talk about a famous singer without being able to find one single intelligent word to say, although he reads reams about Madame Malibran's perfections in the papers every day."

Madame de Chasteller felt so extremely happy that all at once she thought:

"I am in danger of forgetting myself by some friendly word or smile that will spoil all the happiness of the evening. This is indeed very sweet to me, but if I don't want to be angry with myself, I must stop right here."

She rose and took her departure.

Soon after, Lucien also left; he needed to meditate calmly on the extent of his own imbecility and on Madame de Chasteller's cool indifference. After five or six hours of heart-breaking reflection, he arrived at this glorious conclusion:

He was not a lieutenant-colonel and as such worthy of Madame de Chasteller's attention. Her behavior toward him at the ball had been mere trifling on her part, a passing fancy, to which such naturally affectionate women are subject. For an instant the uniform had given her an illusion; for an instant, nothing better being at hand, she had mistaken him for a colonel. All this was cold comfort.

"I am a complete fool and this woman an actress and a coquette—and wonderfully beautiful! The devil if I ever so much as glance at her windows again!"

After this heroic resolution, Lucien's expression could not have been gayer if he had been about to be hanged. In spite of the lateness of the hour he started out for a ride. He had hardly left the city than he perceived that he was incapable of controlling his horse. He handed it over to his servant and continued on foot. Not long afterwards, as midnight was striking, in spite of all the insults he had heaped on Madame de Chasteller, he was once more installed on the stone opposite her window.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

**H**IS ARRIVAL filled her with joy. Leaving Madame de Commercy's, she had said to herself:

"He must be so very displeased with himself and with me, that he will make up his mind to forget me; or, at least, if he comes here again, it will not be for several days."

Now and then, in the intense darkness, Madame de Chasteller could make out the lighted tip of Lucien's little cigar. She loved him madly at this moment. If only in the great universal silence of the night, Lucien had had sense enough to come up close to her window and say very softly something ingenious and original such as:

"Good evening, Madam. Won't you deign just to make a sign that I am heard?"

Whereupon Madame de Chasteller would probably have whispered: "Goodnight, M. Leuwen." And the intonation of those three words would have left nothing to be desired by the most exigent lover. To speak to Lucien, if it were only to pronounce his name, would have been the height of voluptuousness for Madame de Chasteller.

After having played the fool, as he said to himself, Lucien sought out a billiard parlor located at the rear of a filthy courtyard, where he was sure of finding some of the lieutenants of his regiment. He was in so piteous a state that it actually gave him pleasure to see them. His pleasure was apparent and pleased these young men who were being jolly good fellows that evening, but quite prepared to resume their fashionable haughtiness the following day.

Lucien had the pleasure of playing and of losing. It was decided that the few napoleons which had been won should

not be spent at once. Champagne was brought, and Lucien had the wit to get drunk, so drunk that the attendant, together with one of the neighbors he called in, was obliged to take him home.

Thus it is that love raises one above the swinish herd!

The next day Lucien behaved exactly like a madman. His comrades, the lieutenants, having reverted to their normal hostility, remarked among themselves:

"This little fop from Paris is not used to champagne, he hasn't got over last night yet. We'll have to get him to drink often, and we'll make a fool of him before, after, and during; wonderful!"

The morning after the first meeting since the ball with the woman he had felt so sure of, he was altogether out of his mind. He understood absolutely nothing of all that was happening to him—neither the novel sensations stirring in his heart, nor other people's behavior toward him. He kept imagining that they were making allusions to his feeling for Madame de Chasteller, and it took all the reason he could muster not to give way to his anger.

"I shall just live from day to day," he finally decided, "doing whatever I please at the moment I please. Provided I confide in no one, and that I don't write to a soul about my folly, no one will be able to say to me later on: 'You were mad.' If this disease doesn't kill me, at least I won't ever have to blush. A folly well hidden loses half its ill effects. The main thing is to prevent people guessing my true feelings."

In the space of a few days a complete change took place in Lucien Leuwen. Society was amazed at his gaiety and his wit.

"He is unprincipled, he is immoral, but he is really eloquent," everyone at Madame de Puylaurens kept saying.

"My friend, you are deteriorating," said that witty woman to him one day.



Lucien talked for the sake of talking, was on both sides at once, he exaggerated and distorted everything he recounted, and he recounted a great deal and at great length. In short, he ran on like a provincial wag, and in consequence his success was enormous. The inhabitants of Nancy now recognized what they were in the habit of admiring; formerly they had found him queer, eccentric, affected, often incomprehensible.

The truth was that Lucien was in mortal terror of letting people see what was happening in his heart. He felt himself closely watched and spied on by Doctor Du Poirier whom he had begun to suspect of having some understanding with M. Thiers, Louis-Philippe's clever Minister of Police. But Lucien could not very well break with Doctor Du Poirier. He could not hope to get rid of him by ceasing to talk to him. Du Poirier was entrenched in this society into which he had introduced Lucien, and to break with him would have been extremely ridiculous, as well as embarrassing. And not to break with so active, insinuating, and also so susceptible an individual, meant treating him as an intimate friend, as a father.

"It is impossible to overplay a part with these people," Lucien thought, and he began talking like a veritable actor. He acted a role all the time and the silliest one he could think of, wilfully using the most absurd terms. He had to have someone with him every minute, solitude having become unbearable. The more preposterous the theories he upheld, the more completely his mind was diverted from the serious side of his life which was not satisfactory, and his mind was his soul's buffoon.

He was no Don Juan, far from it. We can't say what he might become some day, but at that time, when alone with a woman he had no aptitude for acting in any way except the way he felt. Until now, he had treated with the profoundest scorn this sort of talent, the lack of which he was

beginning to regret. At least he had no illusions on this score.

The terrible remark of Ernest, his learned cousin, on his total lack of sense where women were concerned, echoed almost as insistently in his mind as the frightful remark of the post-master about the lieutenant-colonel and Madame de Chasteller.

Dozens of times his reason told him that he should try to see this Bouchard again, that with money and flattery he could probably learn many more details. It was beyond him. The mere sight of the post-master in the distance gave him goose flesh.

His mind thought it was justified in despising Madame de Chasteller, but every day his heart found new reasons for adoring her as the purest, the most celestial being, and the farthest removed from all considerations of vanity and money—which constitute a second religion in the provinces.

The struggle between his mind and heart literally almost drove Lucien crazy, and certainly made him one of the most miserable of men. It was just at the moment when, because of his horses, his tilbury and his liveried servants, he was the object of envy of all the lieutenants of the regiment, and of all the young gentlemen of Nancy and the surrounding countryside who, seeing him rich, handsome enough, and brave, looked upon him as, without a doubt, the luckiest man they had ever met. His dark melancholy mien, as he walked the streets alone, his absent-mindedness, his sudden bursts of temper that seemed like ill nature, were all considered as the highest and noblest form of fatuity. The more enlightened ones saw in all this an artful imitation of Lord Byron, who was being talked about a great deal at that time.

His first visit to the billiard parlor was not the last. Gossip was quick to pounce upon it; and just as all Nancy had added a

dozen or more liveries to the four Madame Leuwen had sent to her son from Paris, now everybody repeated that Lucien was carried home dead drunk every night. The indifferent were astonished, the former Carlist officers delighted. One heart alone was pierced to the quick.

"Could I have been mistaken in him?"

Losing his senses in order to forget his misery was evidently not very pretty, but it was the only remedy he could think of, or rather, he had simply let himself drift; garrison life was there and he succumbed to it. What else could he do if he was to avoid unbearable nights?

This was the first unhappiness he had ever known. Until now his life had been made up entirely of work and pleasure. For a long time he had been received, and with distinction, by all the best families of Nancy. But the very thing that assured his success took away all his pleasure. Lucien was like an old coquette: since he was always acting, nothing gave him pleasure.

"If I were in Germany I should speak German," he said to himself. "In Nancy I speak 'Provincial.'"

It would have seemed to him a blasphemy if he had said of a morning: "It is a beautiful morning." Frowning with the important air of a big landowner he would cry: "What wonderful weather for hay!"

His excesses in Charpentier's billiard parlor somewhat tarnished his reputation. But a few days before the news of his misbehavior burst over the city, he had bought an enormous calash, very suitable for holding large families in which Nancy abounded, and indeed, it was with this end in view that he had purchased it. The six Demoiselles de Serpierre and their mother had *handseled* it, as they say in this region. Several other families, equally numerous, ventured to ask to borrow it and instantly obtained permission.

"This M. Leuwen is a good sort, really," was said on all

sides. "Of course it doesn't mean much to him: his father speculates with the Minister of the Interior, and it's our poor public funds that pay for all this."

It was in the same amiable fashion that Dr. Du Poirier looked upon the "little present" which Lucien had given him at the end of his attack of gout.

Everything was going as smoothly as possible for Lucien, even his father raised no objections to his extravagance. Lucien was sure that everyone spoke well of him to Madame de Chasteller. But the fact remained that the house of the Marquis de Pontlevé was the only one in Nancy in which he seemed to be losing ground. In vain, Lucien tried to call; but, rather than receive him, Madame de Chasteller closed her door to everyone on the pretext of illness. She had even deceived Doctor Du Poirier himself, who told Lucien that Madame de Chasteller would do well not to go out for some time to come. Using this excuse furnished by Du Poirier, Madame de Chasteller paid only a very few calls without being accused of being arrogant or unsociable by the ladies of Nancy.

The second time Lucien saw her after the ball, he was barely treated as a casual acquaintance; it even seemed to him that to the few remarks he addressed to her she replied even less than the simplest courtesy demanded. For this second interview Lucien had formed the most heroic resolutions. His scorn for himself was redoubled by the discovery of his lack of courage when the moment for action arrived.

"My God!" he thought. "Will the same thing happen to me when my regiment charges the enemy?"

Lucien reproached himself bitterly.

The next day he had hardly arrived at Madame de Marcilly's when Madame de Chasteller was announced.

Her indifference was so pronounced that toward the end of the call he suddenly revolted. For the first time he took

advantage of the position he enjoyed in society to offer Madame de Chasteller his hand to escort her to her carriage, although it was evident that this hypocritical courtesy annoyed her exceedingly.

"Forgive me, Madam, if I seem a little indiscreet; I am very unhappy!"

"That, sir, is not what people say," replied Madame de Chasteller with an ease which was anything but natural, as she hurried toward her carriage.

"I have made myself the sycophant of all the inhabitants of Nancy in the hope that they will speak well of me to you; and at night I try to forget you by losing my senses."

"I do not think, sir, that I have given you the right . . ."

At that moment Madame de Chasteller's footman came forward to open the carriage door, and the horses bore her away more dead than alive.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

**I**S THERE anything more degrading," cried Lucien to himself, standing stock still where he was, "than to persist in struggling against the demon of rank; never can I hope to be forgiven for not having epaulets with bullion fringe."

Nothing could have been more disheartening than this reflection, and yet, during the visit which had terminated with the little dialogue we have just reported, Lucien had been fairly intoxicated by Bathilde's divine pallor (Bathilde was one of the Christian names of Madame de Chasteller), and by the amazing beauty of her eyes.

"One certainly cannot accuse that icy reserve of having

betrayed the least spark of interest during the whole half-hour in which so many things were talked about. But, in spite of all the prudence she imposes on herself, I can see something dark and mysterious and eager stirring in the depths of those eyes, as though they were following a conversation far more intimate and exciting than the one our ears were listening to."

Neglecting nothing that would make him ridiculous, even in his own eyes, our poor Lucien, thus encouraged as we have seen, decided to write to her. He wrote a very fine letter which he went to post himself at Darney, a town on the road to Paris about six leagues from Nancy. A second letter had the same fate as the first: it remained unanswered. Fortunately in the third he let slip by chance and not by wit (of which, in all conscience, we cannot suspect him) the word *suspicion*. The word was a precious ally on the side of love which was waging a ceaseless battle in Madame de Chasteller's heart. The fact is, in spite of all her self-reproaches, she loved Lucien with her whole soul. Days counted, and were prized by her, only because of the hours spent at night behind the shutters of her drawing room listening for his footsteps. For Lucien, little dreaming of all the success of this strategy, would remain hours on end in the Rue de la Pompe.

Bathilde (the title of *Madame* is far too dignified for such childish behavior) spent her evenings behind the shutters, breathing through a little tube of licorice paper which she placed between her lips as Lucien did his little cigars. In the midst of the deep silence of the Rue de la Pompe (deserted even by day, but how much lonelier at eleven o'clock at night) she enjoyed the not too sinful pleasure of listening to the crackling of licorice paper in Lucien's hands as he tore off a sheet from the little book to make his *cigarito*. It was M. de Blancet who had had the honor and the happiness of procuring for Madame de Chasteller some of these little books

of licorice paper which, as everyone knows, are imported from Barcelona.

During the first days following the ball, reproaching herself bitterly for having failed in all that a woman owes herself, and rather because of her esteem for Lucien, whose respect she craved more than anything in the world, than because of her own reputation, she had imposed on herself the boredom of pretending to be ill and of scarcely ever going out. It is true that by this judicious behavior she succeeded in making people forget entirely her misadventure at the ball. She had been seen to blush while talking to Lucien, but since in two months she had not once received him, although nothing in the world would have been simpler, people had ended by supposing that it was during her conversation with Lucien that she had begun to feel the first effects of that indisposition which a little later forced her to leave the ball. Since her fainting fit at the ball she had said to two or three ladies of her acquaintance:

"I have not yet recovered my customary health; I lost it in a glass of champagne."

Disturbed at seeing Lucien again, and by what he had dared say to her at their last encounter, she became more and more faithful to her vow of complete solitude.

Madame de Chasteller had satisfied the claims of discretion. Nobody suspected any moral cause for her indisposition at the ball, but her heart suffered cruelly. She had lost her self-respect. That inner peace, which, since the revolution of 1830, had been her only solace, was now completely unknown to her. This state of mind and her enforced retirement began really to affect her health. All these various circumstances, and also, no doubt, the resultant boredom, combined to give an added value to Lucien's letters.

For a month now, Madame de Chasteller had done much for the cause of virtue, or at least what is the clearest evidence

of virtue: she had been ceaselessly tormented. What more could the stern voice of duty demand? Or, in other words: could Lucien now possibly think that she had been lacking in feminine reserve? Whatever that frightful word *suspicion* he had pronounced might imply, could Lucien find anything in her subsequent behavior to strengthen that suspicion? For several days she had the pleasure of answering *No* to this question she endlessly put to herself.

"But what in the world was that suspicion he had about me? It must have been something of a really serious nature. . . . Why! in a flash, it changed his whole expression. And, oh!" she added, blushing, "what a question that sudden change wrung from me!"

Then bitter remorse, inspired by the recollection of that question she had dared to ask, once more took complete possession of her.

"How little control I had over myself! . . . Oh, what it must have taken to produce such a change in his whole expression! Was it so serious then, that suspicion which suddenly made him pause in the midst of the liveliest outburst of sympathy?"

Just at that lucky moment Lucien's third letter arrived. The first two had given her keen pleasure, but she had not felt the least temptation to answer them. After reading this last one, Bathilde quickly hurried to get her *escritoire*, set it on a table, opened it, and began to write before giving herself time to think.

"It is *sending* a letter, not writing it that might be reprehensible," she observed vaguely to herself.

It need hardly be said that the reply was written in a style of studied haughtiness. It advised Lucien two or three times to give up all hope, even the word *hope* was avoided with an infinite skill on which Madame de Chasteller congratulated herself. Alas! Without knowing it, she was a victim of her



Jesuitical education; she was deceiving herself, all unconsciously making use in her own case of that art of deceiving others which she had been taught at the Sacred Heart: she *answered him*: that was the one important thing she failed to realize.

Having finished her letter of a page and a half, Madame de Chasteller almost danced for joy as she began pacing up and down her room. After an hour's reflection, she ordered her carriage. As they drew near the post office, she pulled the bellrope:

"I forgot," she said to the footman, "I have this letter to mail. Please be quick about it."

The post office was only a few steps away. She followed the footman with her eyes and saw that he did not glance at the address which she had written in a somewhat disguised hand:

To M. Pierre Lafont  
General Delivery  
Darney.

This was the name (that of one of Lucien's servants) and the address which Lucien had given her in his letter, with all proper humility and without any improper show of hope.

Nothing could possibly convey Lucien's surprise, almost his terror, when the next day, having gone in the most perfunctory way and without the least hope, to wait on the road to Darney for his servant Lafont to return from the post office, he saw the man as he rode up take a letter out of his pocket. Lucien fell rather than dismounted from his horse, and without opening the letter and scarcely knowing what he was doing, plunged into the nearby woods. When he found himself in the middle of a thicket of chestnut trees, and felt sure that he was hidden from view on all sides, he sat down and settled himself comfortably like a man who, awaiting the

stroke of the axe that will dispatch him into the next world, wants to relish the sensation.

How different from the reaction of a man of the world to whom fortune has not accorded that uncomfortable gift, father of so many absurdities, that is called a soul! For sensible people, wooing a woman is an agreeable duel. Kant, the great philosopher, adds: "The sense of duality is powerfully revealed when the perfect happiness to be found in love, can only be found in *complete* sympathy, that is, in the total absence of the sense of being two."

"So Madame de Chasteller has replied!" any young man from Paris, somewhat less delicately reared than Lucien, would have said to himself. "Her lofty soul has compromised at last. That is the first step. The rest is merely a matter of form; it will take a month or two months, depending on how more or less adroit I may be, how more or less exaggerated are her ideas on the length of time a truly virtuous woman should hold out."

Lying on the ground reading those terrible lines, Lucien did not yet perceive the principal point of the letter which, for him, should have been: "Madame de Chasteller has replied!" He was horrified by the severity of the language and the tone of profound conviction with which she exhorted him never again to mention sentiments of such a nature, at the same time enjoining him, in the name of honor, in the name of that which all respectable people regard as most sacred in their intercourse with each other, to abandon those singular ideas with which, no doubt, he had merely wished to test her heart, before giving himself up to a folly which in their respective positions, and above all, considering her way of thinking, was an aberration (she dared employ the word) impossible to understand.

"That is a dismissal in proper form!" thought Lucien after reading the appalling missive five or six times at least. "I am

in no state, at the moment, to compose any sort of an answer," he said to himself. "Yet, as the Paris mail comes through Darney tomorrow morning, if my letter is not mailed tonight, Madame de Chasteller will not receive it for at least four days."

This decided him. There, in the midst of the woods, with a pencil he happened to find in his pocket, and using the top of his shako to write on, he composed a reply with about the same amount of sagacity as had governed his thoughts for the past hour. It was, he thought, very bad. It dissatisfied him particularly because it left no chance for hope, or for opening a future attack. Thus we see how much of a coxcomb there is in the heart of every child of Paris! And yet his reply revealed, in spite of the corrections he made on reading it over, a heart really grieved by the insensibility and the disdain of Madame de Chasteller's letter.

He went back to the road and sent his servant to buy paper and writing materials in Darney. He copied his reply, but after his servant had started off for Darney again, he was on the point of galloping after him two or three times to recover it, so inept did it seem to him, and without the least chance of advancing his suit. The only thing that restrained him was the utter impossibility, in his present state, of composing anything better.

"Ah, how right Ernest was!" he thought. "Heaven never intended me to be a success with women! I shall never raise myself above the ladies of the Opera who think highly of me because of my horses and my father's fortune. I could, perhaps, add a provincial marquise or two to their number if intimate friendship with their husbands were not so irksome."

While indulging in these reflections on the meagerness of his talent in that direction, and waiting for his servant to return, he took advantage of the remaining paper to compose a second letter, and having finished it, he found it even

more in the *languishing swain* style and insipid than the one now in the mail.

That night he did not go to the Charpentier billiard parlor. His author's pride being too humiliated by the style of the two letters he had written, he spent the night composing a third which, after he had made a fair copy in a legible hand, reached the formidable length of seven pages. He worked on it until three o'clock in the morning; at five, before going to drill, he had the courage to dispatch it to the post at Darney.

"If the Paris mail is a trifle late, Madame de Chasteller will receive it at the same time as the little scribble I wrote on the road yesterday, and perhaps will not think me such a complete idiot."

Fortunately for him, the Paris mail had already left when the second letter arrived at Darney, and Madame de Chasteller received only the first one next morning.

The distress, the almost childish simplicity of this letter, the perfect and ingenuous devotion, without effort and without hope, that it displayed, seemed to Madame de Chasteller in marked contrast to the assumed fatuity of the elegant young second-lieutenant. Were these really the words and the sentiments of that brilliant young man who, in his dashing calash, thundered through the streets of Nancy? All that, however, had never really worried Madame de Chasteller. But the clever ones of Nancy called Lucien a coxcomb and even believed it themselves, because with all the advantages he enjoyed on account of his wealth, they, in his place, would have been coxcombs.

Lucien was really more modest than conceited. He had the good grace not to know his worth in anything except mathematics, chemistry, and horsemanship. With what joy he would have exchanged these talents, generally accorded him, for the

art of making himself loved by the ladies which, as he had observed, was enjoyed by several of his acquaintances in Paris.

Madame de Chasteller had repented many times for having written to Lucien; the reply she might receive from him filled her with a sort of terror. But now all her fears seemed to be belied in the most charming manner.

Madame de Chasteller was certainly much occupied that day. She had to read this letter five or six times, after first closing and locking three or four doors in her apartment, before she could decide what her idea of Lucien's character ought to be. There seemed to her to be a contradiction: his conduct in Nancy was that of a coxcomb, his letter that of a child.

No, really, this was not the letter of a presumptuous, even less of a vain man. Madame de Chasteller possessed enough knowledge of the world and enough intelligence to be sure that the letter revealed a charming simplicity and not the affectation and fatuous conceit, more or less disguised, of a man very much in vogue; for such was Lucien's role in Nancy, had he only had the wit to realize his good fortune and profit by it.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE ONLY CLEVER THING about Lucien's letter was his request for a reply.

"Grant me your forgiveness, Madam, and I swear eternal silence."

"Ought I to write him that reply?" Madame de Chasteller asked herself. "Would that not be the beginning of a correspondence?"

A quarter of an hour later she said to herself:

"Forever to deny oneself every happiness that comes along, even the most innocent—what a miserable existence! What is the use of living on stilts? Haven't I been bored enough for the past two years, being kept away from Paris? What harm can it do to write this letter, the last one he will ever receive from me, provided it is written so that it may be read and commented upon without danger even by the ladies who for-gather at Madame de Commercy's?"

Long mulled over and so absorbing to write, this letter was sent at last. It was full of wise counsels offered in a friendly tone. He was exhorted to guard against, or to cure himself of, a weakness which, to be sure, was no more than a passing fancy—unless of course it were just a little fabrication he had been naughty enough to indulge in as a relief from the idle boredom of garrison life. The tone of the letter was in no way tragic; Madame de Chasteller had even tried to adopt that of an ordinary correspondent, and to avoid the high-sounding phrases of outraged virtue. But unknown to herself there had crept into her letter phrases of a profound seriousness that were the echo of her real feelings, the pain and presentiments of a deeply troubled soul. Lucien felt rather than perceived these nuances; a letter written by a really frigid soul would have discouraged him altogether.

Her letter had hardly been mailed when Madame de Chasteller received the long one of seven pages which Lucien had been at such pains to write. She was outraged, and bitterly regretted the indulgent tone she had used in hers. Thinking he was acting for the best, Lucien, without realizing it, was following the doubtful lessons in conceit and crude cunning toward women which form the greater share of the elevated conversations of young men of twenty when they are not talking politics.

Forthwith Madame de Chasteller sat down and wrote four lines, begging M. Leuwen not to continue a pointless corre-

spondence; otherwise she would be under the disagreeable necessity of returning his letters unopened. She hastened to have this letter mailed. Nothing could have been colder.

Strong in her fine resolution, irrevocable since she had written it, to return unopened any future letters Lucien might write, and believing that she had now broken with him completely, Madame de Chasteller found herself very poor company. She ordered her carriage and decided to repay some of the calls she owed. She began with the de Serpierres. It was as though a knife had pierced her heart when, on entering the drawing room, the first person her eyes fell on was Lucien, who was playing with the young ladies like so many children, in the presence of their father and mother.

"Is Madame de Chasteller's presence really so disconcerting?" asked Mademoiselle Théodelinde a few moments later, without the slightest desire to be disagreeable but simply because it was a fact she had observed. "You are no fun any longer. Does she frighten you?"

"Well, if you must know, she does!" replied Lucien.

Madame de Chasteller could not very well help adopting the general tone of the conversation, and, in spite of herself, spoke to Lucien without severity. Lucien discovered that he was able to reply readily, and for the second time in his life ideas flocked into his head and, in addressing Madame de Chasteller, he was able to find words to express them.

"It would be out of place to treat M. Leuwen with the proper coldness," thought Madame de Chasteller in order to justify herself in her own eyes. "M. Leuwen cannot have received my letters yet . . . Besides, I am seeing him perhaps for the last time. If my unworthy heart continues to be occupied with him, I shall find some means of leaving Nancy."

The vision called up by this thought softened Madame de Chasteller in spite of herself; it was almost as though she had said:

"I shall have to leave the only place where I can hope to find a little happiness."

By means of this reasoning, Madame de Chasteller was able to forgive herself for being unconcernedly agreeable and gay, in keeping with the general good humor she had found in the drawing room. The gaiety was so contagious, and everybody was so pleased with the company present, that the idea occurred to Mademoiselle Théodelinde of taking a drive in Lucien's calash, which they all used without ceremony. She consulted her mother in a whisper.

"Let's all go to the *Green Huntsman*," she then proposed aloud.

Her suggestion was approved by acclamation. Madame de Chasteller was so miserable at home that she had not the courage to refuse this outing. She took two of the girls with her in her carriage, and together they started off for a charming café situated about a league and a half from the city, in the midst of the first tall trees of the Burelviller woods. Cafés of this kind in the woods, which are of German origin and where there is usually music played by a band of wind instruments, are happily gaining in popularity in several cities of France.

In the woods of the *Green Huntsman* their conversation took on a quiet gaiety and friendly ease that was ideal. It was the first time that Lucien had dared to talk so much in front of Madame de Chasteller and to address her directly. She answered him, and even once or twice could not help looking at him with a smile. Later she even took his arm. He was utterly happy. Madame de Chasteller observed that the eldest of the young ladies was on the point of falling in love with him.

That evening in the coffee-house there was a band of Bohemian horn players who performed ravishingly some simple, sweet and rather slow music. Nothing could have been more



tender, more engaging, more in harmony with the late afternoon sun as it sank behind the tall trees. From time to time it sent its rays darting through those green depths, lighting for a moment that semi-darkness—the mysterious twilight of great forests which is always so troubling. It was one of those enchanting evenings that is an enemy of the heart's tranquillity. It may have been because of all this that Lucien, less shy than usual, but without being too bold, turned to Madame de Chasteller as though carried away by an involuntary impulse and said:

"How can you doubt the sincerity and the purity of the sentiment that inspires me? I may not be worth much, I count for nothing in the world, but can't you see that I love you with my whole soul? From the day of my arrival when my horse fell under your windows, I have thought of nothing but you, and that in spite of myself, for you cannot be said to have spoiled me with your favors. I can swear, although it may seem childish and perhaps terribly ridiculous to you, that the sweetest moments of my life are those I spend under your windows every night."

Madame de Chasteller, who had taken his arm, did not protest, seemed even to lean on him a little. She looked at him with eyes grown intent, if not a little tender, for which Lucien was almost ready to reproach her!

"As soon as we are back in Nancy, when you are caught up in life's vanities again, you will see in me nothing but a little second-lieutenant. You will be severe and even, I dare say, unkind. You won't have to do much to make me miserable; the mere fear of displeasing you is enough to take away all my peace of mind."

This was said with such touching sincerity and simplicity that Madame de Chasteller impulsively replied:

"You mustn't believe the letter you will receive from me!"

She spoke quickly and Lucien replied in the same way:

"My God! Could I have displeased you?"

"Yes; your long letter dated last Tuesday seems to have been written by another person; it reveals an unfeeling heart and one that harbors intentions inimical to me; it is almost the letter of a fatuous and vain little man."

"But you can see for yourself if I have any pretensions where you are concerned! You can see very well that you are the mistress of my fate! And you are, apparently, going to make me very unhappy."

"No, or else your happiness does not depend on me."

Involuntarily, Lucien stopped and looked at her: he saw the same tender and friendly eyes gazing into his as during their conversation at the ball; but this time they seemed to be veiled with a sort of sadness. If they had not been in a clearing of the woods within a hundred steps of the Demoiselles de Serpierre where they might be seen, Lucien would have embraced her, and she, in truth, would have allowed herself to be embraced. Such is the danger of sincerity, music, and great forests!

Madame de Chasteller saw all her imprudence written in Lucien's eyes, and was frightened.

"Remember where we are. . . ."

And ashamed of her exclamation and what it seemed to imply:

"Not another syllable," she said with resolute severity, "and let us continue walking."

Lucien obeyed, but with his eyes fastened on her, and she could see how hard it was for him to obey her and remain silent. Little by little he felt her leaning with a friendly pressure on his arm. Tears, which were evidently tears of happiness, rose to Lucien's eyes.

"Yes, my friend," she said after an endless silence, "I believe that you are sincere."

"How happy you make me! But the moment I leave you,

I shall begin trembling again. You inspire me with terror. Back in the drawing rooms of Nancy you will once more become for me the same severe and implacable goddess . . .”

“I was afraid of myself. I trembled for fear you had lost all respect for me after the silly question I asked you at the ball. . . .”

At that moment the little woodland path took a sudden turn, and they came upon two of the de Serpierre sisters strolling arm in arm, not twenty steps away. Lucien now feared that everything was over for him as it had been after the look she had given him at the ball; inspired by this danger he said precipitately:

“Allow me to call on you tomorrow.”

“Oh! God!” she cried in terror.

“Have mercy!”

“Well then, I will receive you tomorrow.”

After pronouncing these words, Madame de Chasteller was more dead than alive. The Demoiselles de Serpierre found her looking extremely pale, breathing with difficulty and with swooning eyes. Madame de Chasteller asked to lean on their arms.

“Imagine, my dears, the freshness of the evening air has made me feel quite faint. If you don’t mind, let’s go to the carriages right away.”

In the life he had led, both as a student and a heedless and spoiled young man, Lucien had never felt a sensation comparable in the least to what he felt now. It is because of rare moments like these that life is worth living.

“You are really stupid,” Mademoiselle Théodelinde said to him in the carriage.

“Shame on you, daughter. You are not very polite!” remonstrated Madame de Serpierre.

"But he is insufferable this evening," replied the little provincial miss.

And it is because of such artlessness that one sometimes loves the provinces where it is still possible. One may still find certain natural and sincere impulses among the young people that are perfectly harmless, and not invariably spoiled the next moment by little mincing hypocritical airs.

Hardly had Madame de Chasteller been restored to solitude and reason, than she was overcome with remorse at having given Lucien permission to call. She made up her mind to have recourse to a certain person the reader has already met; he may have a contemptuous recollection of one of those creatures, so common in the provinces where they are respected, but who hide themselves in Paris where ridicule is the rule, a certain Mademoiselle Bérard, a bourgeoisie whom we found insinuating herself among the great ladies in the Chapel of the Penitents, the first time Lucien had had wit enough to visit it. She was a tiny, dried up little person of forty-five or fifty, with a pointed nose and shifty eyes, invariably dressed with the greatest care, a habit she had acquired in England, where for twenty years she had been companion to Lady Beatown, a wealthy Catholic peeress. Mademoiselle Bérard seemed to have been born for this odious role which the English, remarkable painters of everything disagreeable, designate by the name of *toadeater*. The endless mortifications that a poor lady's companion has to endure without a word as a vent for some rich woman's ill humor with the world she bores, have given rise to this lovely post. Malicious by nature, atrabilious, and a born gossip, not rich enough for her piety to win her any special deference, Mademoiselle Bérard needed an opulent house that could furnish her with facts to distort, gossip to spread, and win her consideration in the world of the sacristies. One thing there was

that not all the treasures of the earth, nor even the order of our Holy Father the Pope, could have wrested from our worthy Mademoiselle Bérard, and that was a moment of discretion about anything she had happened to learn which would harm someone. This absolute lack of discretion was what decided Madame de Chasteller. She sent word to Mademoiselle Bérard that she desired to engage her as her companion.

"This horribly spiteful creature will answer to me for myself," thought Madame de Chasteller. And the severity of this punishment set her conscience at rest. Madame de Chasteller almost forgave herself for the interview she had so lightly granted.

The reputation of Mademoiselle Bérard was so well known that Doctor Du Poirier himself, who was the intermediary Madame de Chasteller had chosen, could not help exclaiming:

"But, Madam, consider what a viper you are bringing into your home!"

Mademoiselle Bérard arrived. Extreme curiosity, rather than pleasure at her preferment, gave her squinting eyes, ordinarily only deceitful and spiteful, a somewhat feverish look. She arrived with a list of pecuniary and other conditions. After agreeing to them all, Madame de Chasteller said:

"I shall ask you to remain in this drawing room where I receive my callers."

"I have the honor of pointing out to you, Madam, that at Lady Beatown's I was assigned a place in the second drawing room adjoining the one occupied by the ladies who accompanied my lady to the princesses, which is perhaps more in keeping with the rules of decorum. My birth . . ."

"Very well, Mademoiselle, in the second drawing room."

And Madame de Chasteller fled to her own room and locked herself in; Mademoiselle Bérard's eyes had made her actually ill.

"My indiscretion of yesterday is now partly repaired," she thought. Before she had had Mademoiselle Bérard in the house, she trembled at every sound, always imagining that a lackey was coming to announce M. Leuwen.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

OUR POOR SECOND-LIEUTENANT never dreamt of the strange company that was being arranged for him. Out of extreme delicacy he felt that he ought not to present himself at Madame de Chasteller's without first having asked permission of the Marquis de Pontlevé, and to be sure of not finding the old Marquis at home, he had to wait until he saw him leave his house at three o'clock, as the Marquis did every day to go to his *Henri V* Club.

No sooner had Lucien seen the Marquis crossing the Place d'Armes, than his heart started thumping. He arrived at the Hôtel de Pontlevé and knocked. He was so ruffled that he addressed the old paralytic porter with deference, and had hardly enough voice to make himself understood.

On his way up to the second floor, it was with a sort of terror that he looked at the great staircase of gray stone with its ornate iron balustrade, lacquered black and decorated, here and there, with gilded fruit. At last he arrived at the door of the apartment occupied by Madame de Chasteller. Stretching out his hand toward an English bell made of brass he almost hoped that he would be told that she was not at home. Never before in his life had Lucien been so overcome by fright.

He rang. The sound of the bell, echoing through the different stories of the house, almost made him ill. Finally the door

opened. The servant went to announce his arrival, after requesting him to wait in the second drawing room where he found Mademoiselle Bérard. He could see that she was not merely paying a call but was there to stay. This sight completed his confusion. He made her a deep bow and went to the other end of the room, where he stood looking intently at an engraving.

In a few moments Madame de Chasteller appeared. Her face was flushed and she seemed agitated. She went over and seated herself on a couch very close to where Mademoiselle Bérard was sitting. She motioned Lucien to a chair. Never had a man found such difficulty in sitting down and running through the few ordinary formulas of politeness. While he was mumbling some perfectly prosaic words, Madame de Chasteller turned excessively pale; whereupon Mademoiselle Bérard put on her spectacles to examine them both.

Lucien's troubled eyes went from Madame de Chasteller's charming countenance to this shiny little yellow face whose pointed nose, with its gold spectacles, was turned toward him. Even in such a trying (thanks to Madame de Chasteller's prudence) moment as this first interview between two individuals who the day before had almost confessed their love for each other, Madame de Chasteller's expression radiated simple happiness, and seemed to reveal a readiness to be moved to a tender rapture. Lucien was touched by this noble expression, and it almost made him forget Mademoiselle Bérard.

He relished with delight the keen pleasure of discovering this new perfection in the woman he loved. This feeling brought a little life back to his heart, he breathed once more; he began to rise out of the abyss of disappointment into which he had been plunged by the unexpected presence of Mademoiselle Bérard.

There still remained one great difficulty to be overcome: what to talk about? And he must talk. The prolonged silence

was becoming dangerous in the presence of this spiteful bigot. To lie seemed horrible to Lucien, yet Mademoiselle Bérard must not be given a chance to gossip.

"What a lovely day, Madam," he said at last. After this terrible phrase he could hardly breathe. He plucked up his courage and was shortly able to add: "That is an exceptionally fine Morghen engraving you have there."

"My father is very fond of him. He brought it back after his last trip to Paris." And her troubled eyes tried not to meet Lucien's.

What made the interview so absurd, and so particularly humiliating for Lucien, was that he had spent a sleepless night preparing a dozen charming and touching speeches, admirably describing, and with art, the exact state of his heart. Above all, he had been careful to couch them in a simple, graceful style, studiously avoiding anything that could imply the slightest ray of hope.

After speaking of the engraving:

"The time is passing," he thought, "and here I am wasting it in these insignificant platitudes, as though what I most desired was to bring my visit to an end. How I shall reproach myself the minute I am outside the house!"

If only he had been in possession of his usual sang-froid, nothing would have been more natural to Lucien than to find charming things to say even in the presence of this old maid, who was malicious no doubt, but not very intelligent. But at the moment it happened that Lucien was incapable of improvising anything. He was afraid of himself, he was much more afraid of Madame de Chasteller, and he was afraid of Mademoiselle Bérard. And nothing is less favorable to the inventive faculty than fear. What increased the difficulty of finding anything passable to say, which afflicted Lucien at this moment, was that he realized only too well the blankness



of his mind, and even exaggerated it to himself. At last a poor little idea came to him:

"All I hope for, Madam, is to become a good cavalry officer, since heaven, it would seem, has not destined me to become an eloquent orator in the Chamber of Deputies."

He saw Mademoiselle Bérard's little eyes open wide, that is, as wide as was possible for them. "Good," he thought, "she thinks I am talking politics, and is preparing her report."

"I should be utterly incapable *in the Chamber* of pleading the causes I felt most deeply, yet away from the tribune, I should be overwhelmed by the vehemence of the sentiments animating my heart. When I opened my mouth before that supreme judge, and, above all, severe, whom I am in terror of displeasing, all I could say would be: See what a state I am in, you have such complete possession of my heart that it has not even the strength to plead its own cause before you."

Madame de Chasteller had listened at first with pleasure, but toward the end of this little discourse she began to be afraid of Mademoiselle Bérard, Lucien's last sentence seeming to her much too transparent.

"And have you, indeed, some hope, sir, of being elected to the Chamber of Deputies?"

"My father allows me complete liberty of choice. He is an excellent father, and as I desire this election with the most fervent passion, I have no doubt he will consent."

"But it seems to me, sir, that you are very young. I fear this may be an unanswerable objection! . . ."

Lucien was trying to couch his reply in terms that would prove the modesty of his expectations, when suddenly struck by this thought:

"So this is that interview which I had looked forward to as the crowning happiness!" he said to himself bitterly.

The thought froze him. He added a few platitudinous phrases that sounded pitiful to him, then rose abruptly, and

hastily took his departure. He could hardly wait to leave that room, to enter which had seemed to him to promise the very height of happiness.

Hardly had he reached the street than he was overwhelmed by amazement and as though stunned.

"But I am cured," he cried after taking a few steps. "My heart is incapable of love. So that is the first interview, the first rendezvous with a woman one loves! What a mistake I made, despising my little ballet dancers! My poor little assignations with them only made me dream of the delight of a rendezvous with a woman I really loved! This thought has often made me sad at the gayest moments. How foolish I have been! But perhaps I was not in love . . . I was mistaken. . . . How ridiculous! How impossible! *I* in love with a woman belonging to the legitimists, with all their selfish, unjust ideas, jealous of their privileges, and vexed every other minute of the day because people make fun of them! To enjoy privileges that everybody makes fun of, what a satisfaction!"

As he said all this to himself, he was thinking of Mademoiselle Bérard. He saw her again sitting there before him with her little cap of yellow lace tied with a faded green ribbon. This decayed, and not very clean, magnificence made him think of a dirty hovel!

"That is what I should have thought of them all, if only I had studied them more critically."

His thoughts were miles away from Madame de Chasteller. He came back to her.

"I not only believed that I loved her, but was even sure that I saw in her a dawning affection for me."

At that moment it was a pleasure to think of anything except Madame de Chasteller! It was the first time in the last three months that he had known this strange sensation.

"To think," he cried with a sort of horror, "that ten min-

utes ago I was forced to lie when I was trying to find tender things to say to Madame de Chasteller! And that, after what happened to me yesterday in the woods of the *Green Huntsman*, after all the transports of joy I have known since that instant and which this morning during drill caused me to fall out of ranks two or three times. Great God! Can I never count on myself? Who would have thought it yesterday! So I am nothing but a fool or a child!"

These reproaches were sincere, but they made him realize no less clearly that he was no longer in love with Madame de Chasteller. It *bored* him to think of her. This last discovery was the final blow; he despised himself.

"Tomorrow I may become an assassin, a thief, anything at all! For I am sure of nothing about myself."

As he walked along the street, Lucien suddenly realized that he was thinking about all the trifling things of Nancy with an entirely new interest.

Not far from the Rue de la Pompe stood a small Gothic chapel, built by René, Duc de Lorraine, which the inhabitants of Nancy admired with artistic transports ever since they had read in a Paris review that it was a thing of beauty. Before that time, its walls had served an ironmonger as a convenient support for his iron bars. Never before had Lucien stopped to glance at this obscure chapel with its little gray nervures, or if, by chance, his eyes rested on it for an instant, soon the thought of Madame de Chasteller had come to distract his attention. Chance at this moment brought him face to face with this Gothic monument, no bigger than one of the smallest chapels in Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. He now stood and looked at it for a long time, absorbed in studying all its minutest details; in fact, he found in it a pleasant diversion. Examining all the little heads of saints and animals, he was astonished by what he felt, but even more by what he no longer felt.

He remembered, all at once, with real pleasure, that there was to be a pool that evening at the Charpentier billiard parlor, and a tourney for the prize cue. In the emptiness of his heart he awaited with impatience the hour of the tourney, and was the first to arrive. He played with keen relish, was never absent-minded, and was, by chance, the winner. But he was careful not to get drunk; drinking to excess seemed to him that day a very silly pastime. But still, out of habit, he sought never to be alone.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

ALL DURING THE TIME Lucien was engaged in joking with his companions, his mind was filled with philosophic and somber thoughts:

"Poor women!" he mused to himself. "They risk their whole fate on our whims, they count on our love! And, after all, why shouldn't they? Are we not always sincere when we swear that we love them? Yesterday at the *Green Huntsman*, I may have been cautious, but I was certainly the sincerest of men. Great God! What is life anyway? From now on I shall be more indulgent."

Lucien watched everything that went on at the Charpentier billiard parlor like a child, he took an interest in everything.

"What in the world has happened to you?" asked one of his comrades. "You're the best-natured chap in the world tonight."

"No queer and superior airs!" exclaimed another.

"Until tonight," said a third, who was the poet of the regiment, "you have been like a jealous ghost come back

to this earth to sneer at the pleasures of the living. Today jest and laughter seem to follow at your heels. . . .”

All these bantering remarks (the gentlemen were anything but subtle) neither offended Lucien, nor did he show the least sign of resentment.

At one o'clock in the morning, when he was once again alone, he said to himself:

“So now I think of everything in the world with pleasure except Madame de Chasteller! And how am I to get out of the sort of obligation I am under to her? I might ask the colonel to send me to N—— to wage a cabbage war on the workers. It would be uncivil, to say the least, to have nothing more to say to her. She would think I had been trifling. . . .

“And if I go to her and tell her truthfully that, at the sight of that horrible little bigot of hers, my heart froze, she will think I am an imbecile or a liar and despise me.”

“But how is it possible,” he thought, reverting to his own conduct, “how is it possible that such an extraordinary, such an overwhelming emotion, one that literally filled my whole life, all my nights and days, that drove sleep away, that might even have made me forget my duty to my country, could have been arrested, annihilated by such a miserable trifle! . . . Great God! Are all men like that? Or am I madder than the rest? Who will solve this riddle for me?”

The next day, when that sunrise bugle call, known in the army as reveille, woke Lucien at five o'clock, he began gravely pacing the floor. He could not get over his amazement. Not to think of Madame de Chasteller left an enormous void.

“Is it possible,” he said to himself, “that Bathilde is nothing to me any longer?” And this charming name which used to have such a magical effect on him, now seemed no different from any other. His mind began to review all of Madame de Chasteller's good qualities, but seemed much

less sure of those than of her divine beauty, and soon concentrated on the latter.

"What magnificent hair, with the sheen of finest silk, so long, so luxuriant! What a lovely color it was yesterday in the shade of the tall trees! What a charming blond! It is not the color of the golden hair praised by Ovid, nor that mahogany shade seen on some of the loveliest heads of Raphael and Carlo Dolci. The name I should give to hers—not very elegant perhaps—but really, under its silky sheen, it is the color of hazelnuts. And that admirable line of the forehead! What thoughts such a forehead hides, too many perhaps! . . . How it used to frighten me! As for her eyes, who has ever seen anything to equal them? Infinity is in her gaze, even when she looks at the most insignificant objects. How she looked at her carriage yesterday as we walked toward it at the *Green Huntsman*! And the exquisite modeling of the eyelids of those beautiful eyes! What a setting! They are most divine, those eyes, when they gaze at nothing. Then, it is the very music of her soul they seem to express. Her nose is indeed a bit aquiline. I don't care much for that in a woman. I never liked it even in her when I was in love with her. *When I was in love with her*! Great God! Where shall I hide? What am I to do? What can I say? And if she had given herself to me? . . . Well, I would have acted as a gallant gentleman then, as always. 'I am mad, dear friend,' I would have said. 'Name a place of exile anywhere, no matter how horrible, and there I shall fly!'"

This thought restored some life to his soul.

"Yes," he said, resuming his critical examination almost as an amusement, "yes, an aquiline nose, pointing, as the pompous Chactas puts it, toward the grave, gives too serious an expression to the face. But still worse, this feature, particularly a three-quarter view of it, always gives an air of pedantry to serious retorts, especially of refusal.

"But what a mouth! Is it possible to imagine a more delicate, a more finely drawn contour? It is as beautiful as the most beautiful antique cameo. And often this delicate, mobile mouth betrays Madame de Chasteller. Often, unknown to her, what a charming form it takes, and the contour of that upper lip, which protrudes a little, seems to change when something has been said that touches her. She is not given to mockery, she even disapproves anything of that sort, and yet, at the slightest pompousness, at the least suggestion of exaggeration in the discourses of these provincials, how the corners of her lovely mouth involuntarily curl! And this alone is what makes the ladies call her malicious, as M. de Sanréal said again the other day at Madame d'Hocquincourt's. She has really a charming, merry, and amusing mind, but she seems always to regret having revealed it."

But all this list of beauties, and more, did not help Lucien's love: it could not be revived. He talked of Madame de Chasteller to himself as a connoisseur might talk about a beautiful sculpture he wanted to sell.

"After all, she must be a bigot at heart," he said. "To have unearthed that execrable Mademoiselle Bérard as a companion only proves it. In which case I should soon have found her acrimonious, sanctimonious, and conscience-stricken. Ah, but what about the lieutenant-colonels? . . ."

This thought engaged Lucien for some time.

"I should prefer her to be a trifle too pleasing to lieutenant-colonels than a bigot; according to my mother there is nothing worse. Perhaps," he went on in the same vein, "it is just a question of class. Since 1830 people of her class have been convinced that if once they could make piety popular, they would find Frenchmen readier to concede them their privileges. Your true bigot is patient. . . ."

But it was evident that Lucien was not even thinking of what he was saying any longer.

At that moment his servant arrived from Darney, and handed him Madame de Chasteller's reply to his seven page letter. As we have said before, it consisted of four extremely curt lines. It stunned him.

"And here I am worrying and feeling ashamed for not loving her! A lot she cares! This is the true expression of her feelings."

He knew very well that almost the first words Madame de Chasteller had said to him at the *Green Huntsman* were a disavowal of this very letter. But it was so short, so curt! Lucien remained stunned, stunned to the point of forgetting all about drill. His orderly, Nicolas, came at a gallop to look for him.

"Ah, Lieutenant, you're going to catch it from the colonel!"

Without a word, Lucien jumped on his horse and started off at a gallop.

While drill was in progress, the colonel rode up behind the Seventh Company where Lucien was rear-file.

"I'm in for it now," he thought. But to his great astonishment no coarse or angry word was directed toward him. "My father must have had someone write to the brute."

However, the consciousness of having merited some blame made him very attentive that morning, and it was perhaps out of malice that the colonel had them repeat several operations when the Seventh was in the lead.

"But I'm a fool to think that I am the center of the universe," Lucien said to himself. "The colonel has his own troubles, and if he doesn't bother to take me down it's because he has forgotten all about me."

All during drill Lucien was too much afraid of some act of inattention to think of anything else. But returning to his rooms, when he dared delve into his heart again, he found his attitude toward Madame de Chasteller entirely altered.

Although he would not be able to present himself at the



de Serpierres' before four-thirty, Lucien was the first at the ordinary that day. He ordered his calash for four o'clock. He was so restless that he went himself to see his horses harnessed, and found a hundred things to find fault with in the stables. Finally, at fifteen minutes past four, he was happily ensconced in the de Serpierre drawing room, surrounded by the young ladies. Their conversation restored some life to his soul, as he told them with infinite grace. Mademoiselle Théodelinde, who had a very marked fondness for our second-lieutenant, was unusually gay and seemed to impart some of her gaiety to him.

Madame de Chasteller entered. They had not been expecting her that day. Never had he seen her looking prettier; she was pale and a little shy.

"And in spite of that shyness," he thought, "she *gives* herself to lieutenant-colonels!"

With these coarse words all his lost passion seemed to revive. But Lucien was young, not used to the world. Without realizing it, he was almost curt, and not in the least gracious to Madame de Chasteller. There was something of the tiger about his love. He was not the same man he had been yesterday.

The young ladies were all of a twitter at this moment: one of Lucien's servants had just entered carrying magnificent bouquets for each of them; these Lucien had had brought all the way from the greenhouses of Darney, famous for their flowers. As there was none for Madame de Chasteller, they divided the largest one in two.

"An unhappy omen," she thought to herself.

In the midst of all the young girls' merriment, she felt a little crestfallen. She could not understand Lucien's brusque and ungracious manner toward her. She wondered whether, to preserve his esteem, and to show a proper regard for her honor, without which no woman can expect to be loved by a

man of any delicacy, she should not leave at once or, at least, appear to be offended.

"No," she said to herself, "because I am not really offended. In my present state of distress only by not allowing myself the least little hypocrisy can I be sure of not failing in the amenities."

In this observation I find that Madame de Chasteller displayed sublime wisdom, as well as in following the dictates of that wisdom. Never in her life had she been more amazed.

"Is M. Leuwen really only a coxcomb as people say? And was his object merely to obtain the indiscreet admission I made day before yesterday?"

Madame de Chasteller reviewed all those signs she had observed in Lucien of a heart that has been touched.

"Could I have been mistaken? Could vanity have blinded me to such a degree? There is no truth in the world for me if M. Leuwen is not really sincere and good."

Then again she fell into the most cruel uncertainty, and rejected with difficulty the word *coxcomb* that all Nancy attached to Lucien's name.

"No, it is not so! I have told myself a thousand times, and at moments when I was perfectly cool and collected, that it is M. Leuwen's tilbury, and especially his servants' liveries that have won him this appellation, and not his true character. To all these people, that is invisible. They know very well that in his place they themselves would certainly be coxcombs! But, as far as he is concerned, it is only innocent vanity, which is a sign of his youth. He enjoys feeling that these fine horses and handsome liveries belong to him. This word *coxcomb* simply betrays all the envy of our ex-officers."

However, despite the incisive character of her reasoning and its striking perspicuity, the word *coxcomb* in her present troubled state still held a terrible weight in influencing her judgment.

"I have spoken to him only five times in my life; I certainly have no great knowledge of the world. One would have to have extraordinary self-confidence to pretend to understand a man's heart after five conversations with him . . . And besides," she continued, growing more and more depressed, "whenever I talked to him I was always much too much concerned with hiding my own feelings to study his. . . . It is, I must admit, a trifle presumptuous for a woman of my age to think that she can judge a man better than an entire city."

After this observation, Madame de Chasteller became distinctly gloomy. Lucien began looking at her again with his old anxiety. He thought:

"So, the insignificance of my rank and my diminutive epaulets are having their effect. What consideration can any lady enjoy in the eyes of Nancy society with a modest second-lieutenant as an admirer, especially when she has been accustomed to leaning on the arm of a colonel, or if there's no presentable colonel at hand, a lieutenant-colonel, or, at least, a major. Nothing less than epaulets with bullion fringe can suffice."

It can be seen that our hero was quite absurd in his reasoning, and it must be admitted that he was no happier than he was clairvoyant. Hardly had he stopped reasoning thus than he wished himself a hundred feet under ground, for he had begun to be in love again.

Madame de Chasteller's heart was not in a much more enviable state. They were both paying, and dearly, for the happiness they had enjoyed two days before at the *Green Huntsman*. And if novelists, as in the old days, still had the happy privilege of drawing a moral to adorn a tale, we should here exclaim: "Just punishment for the temerity of loving somebody one hardly knows! The idea of entrusting one's happiness to a person one has seen only five times!" And if

the novelist should translate his thoughts into a pompous style and even end up with some religious allusion, then the imbeciles would say to each other: "What a moral book, the author must be a most respectable man." But these imbeciles would certainly not say to themselves, not yet having read it in enough books recommended by the Academy: "Considering the present refinement of polite manners, what can a woman know of a *correct* young man even after *fifty* visits, except the extent of his wit or how far he has progressed in the art of saying nothing elegantly? But of his heart, of his particular fashion of going hunting after happiness, not one thing; otherwise he is not a correct young man."

During these moral speculations, the two lovers were looking utterly miserable. A little before the arrival of Madame de Chasteller, Lucien, in order to explain and excuse the impropriety of so early a call, had proposed taking the Serpierre ladies to the *Green Huntsman* for coffee. They had accepted. Now, after a few polite exchanges with Madame de Chasteller, and after the invitation had been repeated and accepted, the young ladies rushed into the house to get their hats. Madame de Serpierre followed at a more dignified pace, and Madame de Chasteller and Lucien were left alone in the long avenue of locust trees. They walked together in silence but separated by the entire width of the wide avenue.

"Is it consistent with what I owe myself," thought Madame de Chasteller, "to go with them to the *Green Huntsman*? Will it not seem to be allowing M. Leuwen somewhat too great an intimacy?"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

**S**HE had only an instant to make up her mind; love quickly took advantage of this added embarrassment. All at once, instead of walking with eyes downcast to avoid meeting Lucien's gaze, Madame de Chasteller turned and looked at him:

"Has M. Leuwen had some cause for annoyance in his regiment, that he should seem so lost in the depths of melancholy?"

"It is true, Madam, that ever since yesterday I have been deeply troubled. I am at a loss to understand what has happened to me." He looked directly at Madame de Chasteller, and by their profound gravity, his eyes showed that he was telling the truth. Madame de Chasteller was startled, and stood still as though rooted to the ground; she was incapable of taking another step.

"I am ashamed of what I am going to say, Madam," Lucien continued, "but my duty, as a man of honor, forces me to speak."

This extraordinarily serious preamble made Madame de Chasteller blush.

"I am afraid that what I have to say, the very words I am forced to use, are as ridiculous as the subject is strange and even idiotic."

There was a little silence. Madame de Chasteller glanced at Lucien with anxiety. He looked really distressed. Finally, as though painfully mastering his mortification, he said hesitatingly and in a low, scarcely audible voice:

"Will you ever believe it, Madam? Will you be able to

listen without laughing at me, without thinking me the most pitiful of men? I cannot rid my mind of that person I met at your house yesterday. The sight of that dreadful face, that pointed nose with its spectacles, seems to have poisoned my soul."

Madame de Chasteller could hardly keep from smiling.

"Never, Madam, since my arrival here in Nancy, have I experienced anything resembling what I felt at the sight of that monster; my heart froze! Since then I have actually spent as much as an hour at a time without thinking of you, and what is even more amazing, it seemed to me that my love was dead."

Madame de Chasteller's face now grew very grave; Lucien could no longer detect the least trace of a smile nor any irony.

"Really, I thought I was mad," he added, reverting to all the simplicity of his usual tone which, in Madame de Chasteller's eyes, precluded the least possibility of deceit or fraud.

"Nancy appeared to me as a new city which I had never seen before, because I had never before seen anything in it but you. A lovely sky would make me say: 'Her soul is purer!' The sight of a gloomy house: 'If Bathilde lived there, how I should love that house!' Please forgive my daring to speak to you like this."

Madame de Chasteller made a little gesture of impatience, as much as to say: "Do go on! Don't bother me with such trifles."

"Well, Madam," continued Lucien who seemed to be scrutinizing her eyes to study the effect of his words, "this morning that gloomy house appeared to me a gloomy house, the beautiful sky seemed to me beautiful without recalling another beauty; in short, I had the misfortune of being in love no longer. Then, suddenly, four terribly severe lines in reply to a letter of mine (undoubtedly much too long) began to dispel the effect of the poison. I had the joy of seeing you,

and my frightful nightmare vanished. I have resumed my chains, but I still feel the chill of the poison. . . . I am afraid I am being a little bombastic, but I don't know how else to express what happened to me ever since I set eyes on your companion. The fatal proof is that I have to make an effort to speak the language of love."

After this frank confession, it seemed to Lucien that a hundred-pound weight had been lifted from his chest. He had so little experience of the world that he had not expected this joyous result.

Madame de Chasteller, on the contrary, was apparently stunned. "It is plain, he is nothing but a coxcomb. How can I possibly take this seriously?" she thought. "Am I to believe that it is the ingenuous confession of a loving heart?"

Lucien's way of speaking, when talking to her, had always been so natural that Madame de Chasteller inclined to the latter view. But she had often noticed that, addressing anyone but herself, he often said the most absurd things intentionally. This recollection of Lucien's posturing sickened her. On the other hand, Lucien's manner, the whole tone of his remarks, were now so different, the end of his discourse had seemed so sincere, how could she help believing him? Could he possibly be such an accomplished actor at his age? But if she were going to credit his strange confession, if she believed it to be sincere, first of all she must not appear to be offended, still less dejected. But what should she do to appear neither the one nor the other?

Madame de Chasteller could hear the young girls as they came running back to the garden. M. and Mme. de Serpierre were already installed in Lucien's big calash. She refused to listen to the voice of reason any longer.

"If I don't go to the *Green Huntsman*, two of these poor children will be deprived of their outing."

And so she got into her own carriage taking the two younger girls with her.

"At least, I shall have a little time for reflection."

Those reflections were very sweet.

"M. Leuwen is an honorable man, and, although it seems perfectly unbelievable and extravagant, I am sure what he says is true. Even before he spoke, his expression, his whole attitude, told me so."

When they left the carriages at the entrance to the Burelviller woods, Lucien was a different man. Madame de Chasteller saw this at a glance. His expression had resumed all its youthful serenity, his manners all their habitual ease.

"His is an upright heart," she thought with delight, "the world has not yet turned him into one of those false, calculating men of fashion; quite amazing at the age of twenty-three! And he has always moved in fashionable society!"

In this Madame de Chasteller was mistaken. From the age of eighteen, Lucien, far from living in the society of the court or of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, had passed his days amidst the retorts and alembics of a chemistry class.

Pretty soon, as they walked along with the two younger girls beside them and the rest of the family some ten paces distant, Madame de Chasteller was leaning once more on Lucien's arm. Not to arouse the curiosity of the two young girls, Lucien assumed a sprightly tone.

"Ever since I had the courage to tell the truth to the person I most esteem in the whole world, I am another man. Already I feel how ridiculous my words were in speaking of that old maid, the sight of whom had poisoned me. . . . How beautiful it is here today, as beautiful as the day before yesterday! But before I can give myself up entirely to the joy this lovely spot awakens, I must know, Madam, your opinion on the absurdity of that part of my harangue where there



was question of chains, of poison, and a lot of other tragic words."

"I must admit, sir, that I am not sure. But in general," she added after a little pause, and with gravity, "I think it showed sincerity. If there was some self-deception, at least, there was no intention of deceiving. And the truth makes anything acceptable—even chains and poison."

Madame de Chasteller tried not to smile at these words.

"Why is it," she asked herself in real distress, "that I can never keep a proper tone in speaking to M. Leuwen! Is talking to him then such happiness for me? And who can say if he is not a coxcomb who looks upon me as just one more poor little provincial he can trifle with? Or perhaps, without being exactly dishonorable, he has only the most casual feeling for me, a love born of the boredom of garrison life?"

So spoke the attorney for the anti-love party in her heart, but decidedly with much less effect. She found an exquisite pleasure in day-dreaming, and spoke only just enough not to seem strange to the Serpierre family that now surrounded the two of them. But, happily for Lucien, the German band finally arrived and began to play Mozart waltzes followed by duets from *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Madame de Chasteller grew even more serious, but little by little she began to feel much happier. As for Lucien, he was living to the full the romance of life—the hope of happiness now seemed a certainty. He had the temerity to say to her in one of those brief instants of semi-freedom that can be snatched even while walking in the midst of a whole family:

"One must never deceive the God one adores. I have been sincere, that is the greatest mark of respect I could offer; am I to be punished for it?"

"What a strange man you are!"

"It might be more polite to agree with you. But the truth is, I don't know what I am, and I'd give a lot if anyone would

enlighten me. I only began to live, and to try to know myself, the day my horse fell with me underneath the window with the parrot-green shutters."

He said this as one whose words come spontaneously as he speaks. Madame de Chasteller could not help being touched: his whole demeanor was sincere and at the same time noble. He had felt a certain diffidence about speaking of his love thus openly; now he was rewarded by a tender smile.

"Do I dare ask to come to see you tomorrow?" he added. "But I have another and almost as great a favor to ask, and that is, not to be received in the presence of that old maid."

"You will gain nothing," replied Madame de Chasteller sadly. "I am much too reluctant to listen to you tête-à-tête treating of a certain subject, which seems to be the only one you can talk to me about. Come only if you are gentleman enough to promise me that you will talk on some entirely different subject."

Lucien promised. This was about all they had a chance to say to each other that afternoon. He was even glad for both of them that, being surrounded by people, they were practically prevented from talking to each other. Even had they been free to do so, they would not have had much more to say, and they were not yet intimate enough not to be embarrassed, Lucien especially, by silence. But, although they said nothing, their eyes seemed to agree that there was no cause for quarrel between them! They loved each other in a way quite different from two days before. They no longer felt those transports of youthful happiness free from suspicions, but rather passion now, and intimacy, and the keenest desire to be able, at last, to trust each other.

"Let me only believe you, and I am yours," Madame de Chasteller's eyes seemed to say. And she would have died of shame if she could have seen their expression. That is one of the misfortunes of extreme beauty, it cannot hide its feel-

ings. But its language is only understood by an indifferent observer. For an instant Lucien thought he understood it, but a moment later was plunged in doubt again.

Their happiness in being together was secret and profound. Lucien almost had tears in his eyes. Several times in the course of their stroll, Madame de Chasteller avoided taking his arm, but without any appearance of affectation in the eyes of the Serpieres, or of coldness toward Lucien.

Finally, as it was now quite dark, they left the *café-hauss* and began walking toward the carriages which had been left at the entrance of the forest. Madame de Chasteller said to Lucien:

"Will you give me your arm, M. Leuwen?"

Lucien pressed the arm offered him and felt the pressure faintly returned. The Bohemian band could be heard in the distance. It was delightful. Then a profound silence fell.

By a lucky chance, when they arrived at the carriages, it appeared that one of the young ladies had dropped her handkerchief in the gardens of the *Green Huntsman*. At first it was suggested that a servant be sent to fetch it, then that they should all drive back. But Lucien, coming out of his reverie to join the discussion, pointed out to Madame de Serpierre that the night was superb, that because of the warm and almost imperceptible breeze, there was no dew, that the young ladies were less overheated than two days ago, that the carriages could follow them, etc., etc. Finally, after offering a quantity of excellent reasons, he concluded by saying that, if the ladies were not tired, it would be agreeable to go back to the garden on foot. Madame de Serpierre referred the decision to Madame de Chasteller:

"To be sure!" replied Madame de Chasteller. "But on condition that the carriages do not follow; that noise of wheels behind one, always stopping if one happens to stop, is too annoying."

Thinking that the musicians, having been paid, would be leaving the garden, Lucien sent a servant ahead to engage them to stay on, and to begin playing once more the selections from *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro*. Returning to the ladies, he casually took Madame de Chasteller's arm. The young ladies were overjoyed at this renewed promenade. Their conversation, as they all strolled along together, was very gay and agreeable. Not to call attention to himself, Lucien did his share of the talking, but he and Madame de Chasteller avoided saying anything directly to each other: they were too happy as it was.

Soon they heard the music beginning again. When they reached the garden, Lucien pretended that M. de Serpierre and he were dying for a glass of punch, and proposed that a very weak one should be made for the ladies. As it was most agreeable being together like this, the suggestion of a punch was greeted with general approval, in spite of the opposition of Madame de Serpierre who insisted that there was nothing more injurious to young girls' complexions. This opinion was seconded by Mademoiselle Théodelinde who was a little bit too fond of Lucien not to be just a little bit jealous.

"You must plead your cause with Mademoiselle Théodelinde," said Madame de Chasteller in the blithest and friendliest of tones.

And in the end, they did not get back to Nancy until half past nine in the evening.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

LUCIEN had missed the evening muster, and it was his week on duty at the barracks. He made haste to look up his adjutant who advised him to go directly to the colonel and make a clean breast of it. The colonel was what was called in 1834 a *Juste-milieu*, and a rabid one. As such, he was extremely jealous of the reception Lucien was accorded in Nancy society. His own lack of success in that quarter, as the English say, might well retard the moment when this devoted colonel would be made a general, aide-de-camp to the King. He replied to the second-lieutenant's initiative with a few very curt words that ordered Lucien to keep quarters for twenty-four hours.

This was exactly what Lucien had dreaded. He went home to write to Madame de Chasteller. But what torture to write a formal letter, yet how imprudent to put into writing the things he had dared to talk to her about! The subject occupied his entire night.

After a thousand misgivings, Lucien sent his servant to the Hôtel de Pontlevé with a letter that could be read by anyone. As a matter of fact, he was afraid to write otherwise to Madame de Chasteller: all his love had returned and with it the extreme terror she inspired in him.

Two days later, at four o'clock in the morning, he was awakened by the order to horse. At the barracks he found everything in confusion. A second-lieutenant was very busy distributing cartridges to the lancers. It was said that mill-workers of a town eight or ten leagues away had just organized and formed a protective society.

Colonel Malher went from one end of the barracks to the other shouting to the officers so that all the lancers could hear:

"What we have to do is to give them such a lesson they'll never forget it. No mercy for the b——! There are crosses to be won."

Riding past Madame de Chasteller's windows Lucien looked up searchingly, but there was no sign of life behind the closely drawn curtains of embroidered muslin. Lucien could not blame Madame de Chasteller: the least sign might be noticed and talked about by the officers of the regiment.

"Madame d'Hocquincourt," he thought, "would certainly have been at her window. But then, would I ever love Madame d'Hocquincourt?"

If Madame de Chasteller had been at her window, Lucien would have found this mark of attention adorable. As a matter of fact, the ladies of Nancy were occupying all the windows along the Rue de la Pompe and the next street, through which the regiment had to pass on its way out of the city.

The Seventh Company, to which Lucien belonged, rode directly in front of the artillery consisting of half a battery with linstocks lighted. The wheels of the ordnance gun carriages and caissons shook the frame houses of Nancy and gave the ladies a pleasurable thrill of fear. Lucien bowed to Madame d'Hocquincourt, Madame de Puylaurens, Madame de Serpierre and Madame de Marcilly.

"I should like to know whom they hate most," thought Lucien, "Louis-Philippe or the mill-workers. . . . Why couldn't Madame de Chasteller have shared the curiosity of all these ladies and so given me that tiny proof of interest? Well, here I am, off to slaughter weavers, as M. de Vassigny so elegantly puts it. If the affair is hot enough, the colonel will be made a *commandeur* of the *Legion d'Honneur*, and as my reward, I shall have won remorse."

The Twenty-seventh Lancers took six hours to cover the eight leagues which separated Nancy from N—. The regiment was delayed by the artillery. Colonel Malher received three couriers, and each time he had the horses of the ordnance changed, dismounting the lancers who seemed to have the strongest horses for hauling the heavy gun carriages.

When they had proceeded about half way, M. Fléron, the prefect, caught up with the regiment, arriving at a fast trot. To speak to the colonel, he was obliged to pass along the whole length of the column from its tail to its head, and had the pleasure of being hooted by all the lancers. He wore a sword which, because of his tiny stature, seemed enormous. The muffled jeering swelled into a burst of laughter which he tried to escape by spurring his horse to a gallop. The laughter redoubled with the usual cries of: "*He will fall! He won't fall! He will fall! He won't fall!*"

But the prefect soon had his revenge. Hardly had they started through the dirty, narrow streets of N— than the lancers were hooted by all the women and children crowding the windows of the poorer quarters and by some of the weavers themselves who, from time to time, appeared at the corners of the narrowest little alleys. They could hear the shops being hastily closed on all sides.

Finally the regiment came out onto the city's chief business thoroughfare; shops were all shut up, not a head in any of the windows, a death-like silence. They reached an irregular and very long square, ornamented with five or six stunted mulberry trees, and with a foul stream, full of all the filth of the town, running down its entire length. And, as it also served as a sewer for several tanneries, the water was blue.

The garments hanging in the windows to dry were so miserable, so tattered and filthy, they made one shudder. The windowpanes were tiny and dirty and in many of the windows the glass had been replaced by old paper covered with

writing and oiled. Everywhere a flagrant picture of poverty that made the heart ache, but not hearts that hoped to win a cross by delivering saber blows in this miserable little town.

The colonel drew up his regiment in order of battle all along the little stream. There the unhappy lancers, dying of hunger and fatigue, spent seven hours exposed to the blazing August sun without anything to eat or drink. As we have said, at the arrival of the regiment, all the shops had been quickly closed, and the taverns even more quickly than the rest.

"We're in a nice mess," one of the lancers shouted.

"We're very popular around here," another voice replied.

"Silence, damn you!" bawled some *Juste-milieu* lieutenant.

Lucien noticed that all the self-respecting officers kept perfectly silent, and were looking grave.

"So, we are facing the enemy," thought Lucien.

He was watching himself, and was pleased to discover that he was as cool as though he were performing an experiment in chemistry at the *École Polytechnique*. This egotistical thought greatly diminished his distaste for this sort of service.

The tall thin lieutenant, whom Lieutenant-Colonel Filloteau had mentioned, came to speak to him, cursing the mill-workers. Lucien did not answer but looked at the officer with unutterable contempt. As the lieutenant walked away several voices, loud enough to be heard, cried out: "Spy! Spy!"

The soldiers were suffering horribly. Two or three were forced to dismount. Men on fatigue duty had been sent to the public fountain. In its basin, which was immense, they found three or four dead cats, recently killed, that had reddened the water with their blood. The thread of warmish water flowing from the ornamental spout was so scanty that it took several minutes to fill one bottle—and there were three hundred and eighty men under arms.

The prefect and the mayor were often to be seen together



going back and forth across the square, trying, it was said in the ranks, to buy wine.

"If I sell you any," each wine-merchant replied, "my house will be pillaged and destroyed."

The regiment was now being regularly assailed every half hour with redoubled jeers and cat-calls.

After the spying lieutenant had left him, Lucien conceived the idea of sending his servants to a village two leagues away which, having neither looms nor workers, was probably peaceable. These servants were told to buy, at any price, one hundred loaves of bread and three or four loads of fodder. The servants having been successful in their mission, at about four o'clock four horses loaded with bread, and two others with hay, appeared on the square. Suddenly there was a dead silence. The peasants came over to Lucien who, after paying them well, had the pleasure of distributing a little bread among the privates of his company.

"Look at our republican beginning his intrigues," exclaimed several of the officers who disliked Lucien.

With less hypocrisy, Filloteau came to ask him for two or three loaves for himself, and hay for his horses.

"It's my horses that worry me," cynically observed Colonel Malher, passing in front of his men.

A moment later Lucien heard M. Fléron saying to the colonel:

"Damn it all, aren't we going to get in a single blow at these blackguards?"

"He is much more rabid than the colonel," thought Lucien. "Colonel Malher can hardly expect to be made a general for killing a dozen or more weavers, but Fléron might well be made prefect and would be sure of the post for two or three years."

Lucien's timely distribution had given them the ingenious idea that there were actually villages in the neighborhood

of the town. Toward five o'clock, a pound of black bread was distributed to each lancer and a small quantity of meat to the officers.

At nightfall one shot was fired, but nobody was hurt.

"I don't know why," thought Lucien, "but I'd be willing to wager that that shot was fired by order of M. Fléron."

About ten o'clock at night, they noticed that all the workers had disappeared. At eleven, some infantry soldiers arrived. The cannons and the howitzers were turned over to them, and at one o'clock in the morning the regiment of lancers, dying of hunger—both men and horses—departed for Nancy. They halted for six hours in a very peaceful village where they were sold bread at eight sous a pound and wine at five francs a bottle; the warlike prefect had forgotten to make arrangements for provisioning the regiment.

For all the military, strategic, political, etc., details of this notable affair, see the newspapers of that time. The regiment had covered itself with glory and the workers had given evidence of the most signal poltroonery.

Such was Lucien's first campaign.

"I wonder if I dare, when I get back to Nancy, present myself at the Hôtel de Pontlevé, provided it is by day?"

He dared. But he was dying of fright when he knocked at the porte-cochère, and as he rang the bell of Madame de Chasteller's apartment, his heart was pounding so that he said to himself:

"My God! Am I going to stop loving her again?"

She was alone, with no Mademoiselle Bérard. Lucien seized her hand passionately. Two minutes later he perceived that he loved her more than ever. Had he had a little more experience he would have succeeded in getting himself told that he too was loved. If he had only had the audacity to throw himself into her arms, he would not have been repulsed. It would at least have been possible to establish a

treaty of peace extremely advantageous to the interests of his love. Instead he did not advance his affairs in the least, and was serenely happy.

It had been reported and believed that the pistol-shot fired by the workers of N—— had killed a young officer of the Lancers. Frightened at first, after learning the facts, relief put Madame de Chasteller in a melting mood.

"I must send you away now," she said with a tone of regret which she had intended to make severe.

Lucien was afraid of offending her, and yielded.

"May I hope, Madam, to see you later at Madame d'Hocquincourt's? It is her day at home."

"Very likely. And I am sure that you will not fail to be there. I know that you are not averse to the company of that very charming lady."

An hour later Lucien presented himself at Madame d'Hocquincourt's, but Madame de Chasteller did not arrive until very late.

After that, time flew for our hero. But lovers are so blissful in their scenes together that the reader, instead of sympathizing with the description of their happiness, becomes jealous of it, and out of revenge is apt to say: "My God! What an insipid book!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

WE SHALL NOW beg leave to take a standing leap over the two following months. This will be all the simpler for us in that Lucien, at the end of those two months, was no further advanced than on the first day. Convinced that he had no gift for making himself desirable to a woman, especially when he was seriously

in love with her, he contented himself every moment of the day with trying to do what pleased him the most at that moment. Never in any given quarter of an hour did he impose on himself the least constraint, pain, or act of prudence that might during the next quarter-hour further his amorous interests with Madame de Chasteller. He told her the truth about everything. For example, one evening:

"But it seems to me," she said to him, "that you say things to M. de Serpierre which are absolutely the contrary of what you say to me. Could it be that you are just a little false? In that case the persons who take an interest in you will be most unhappy."

Mademoiselle Bérard having usurped the second drawing room, Madame de Chasteller received Lucien in a large study or library adjoining it, the door of which was always left open. In the evening when Mademoiselle Bérard retired, Madame de Chasteller's maid took her place; and on this particular evening they could, with perfect security, talk freely about everything and name things by their names: Mademoiselle Bérard had gone to pay calls and the maid was deaf.

"Madam," Lucien replied warmly and with a sort of virtuous indignation, "I have been thrown into the middle of the ocean. I swim so as not to drown and you say: 'He moves his arms too much!' Have you such an exaggerated opinion of the strength of my lungs that you think they alone suffice to re-educate all the inhabitants of Nancy? Do you want me never to see you except here in your house? And even so, they would soon make you ashamed of receiving me just as they have made you ashamed of your desire to return to Paris. It is quite true that on every subject, even on the time of day, I think and believe the exact opposite of the natives of these parts. Do you want me to be reduced to absolute silence? To you alone, Madam, I say what I think about

everything, even politics—about which we are so much at variance. And it is for you alone, in order to be nearer to you, that I have perfected myself in that habit of lying which I adopted the day when, to rid myself of my republican reputation, I went to the Chapel of the Penitents with the worthy Dr. Du Poirier as my guide! Would you prefer, beginning tomorrow, to have me say exactly what I think and to measure swords with the whole world? I shall no longer go to the Penitents, at Madame de Marcilly's I shall no longer look at the portrait of Henri V, at Madame de Commercy's I shall no longer listen to Abbé Rey's absurd homilies; and in less than a week I shall be unable ever to see you again."

"No, that is not what I want," she replied sadly. "And yet I have been deeply distressed ever since yesterday evening. After I urged you to go and talk with Mademoiselle Théodelinde and Madame de Puylaurens, I overheard you telling M. de Serpierre exactly the opposite of what you had just said to me."

"M. de Serpierre buttonholed me as I passed. Blame the provinces where one cannot live without being a hypocrite, or blame the education I have received which has opened my eyes to a good three quarters of all human imbecility. You object sometimes that a Paris education prevents a person from *feeling*; perhaps, but as compensation, it teaches one to see clearly. I take no credit to myself for it, and you would be wrong to accuse me of pedantry, for the fault rests with the witty people who are brought together in my mother's salon. One has only to see clearly to be struck by the absurdity of MM. de Puylaurens, Sanréal, de Serpierre and d'Hocquincourt, and to understand the hypocrisy of Dr. Du Poirier, M. Fléron and Colonel Malher, the three latter blackguards and far more despicable than the former who, out of stupidity, rather than selfishness, naïvely prefer the

happiness of some two hundred thousand privileged individuals to that of the thirty-two million people in France. But here I am, engaged in propaganda! A very stupid way of spending my time with you. Yesterday, which of us seemed to you to be in the right—M. de Serpierre whose arguments I failed to contest, or myself whose real thoughts you know?”

“Alas! both of you! You are changing me, perhaps for the worse! When I am alone, I surprise myself wondering if they did not at the Sacred Heart intentionally teach me some singular lies. One day during a quarrel with the General (that is, M. de Chasteller), he plainly told me so, and then seemed to regret having said it.”

“Naturally! He was jeopardizing his best interests as a husband. It is preferable for a wife to bore her husband by her lack of intelligence, but to remain faithful to her duties. In this, as in everything else, religion is the strongest ally of despotic power. As for me, I am not afraid of endangering my interests as a lover,” replied Lucien proudly. “And after this test, I am sure of myself in all possible eventualities.”

Taking a lover, as Lucien explained, is one of the most decisive steps a young woman can permit herself. If she does not take a lover she dies of boredom, and around forty becomes an imbecile; she either loves a dog to whom she devotes all her attention, or a confessor who devotes all his attention to her; for a truly feminine heart needs a man’s sympathy, as we men need a partner in conversation. If she takes a dishonorable man for lover, a woman, in all probability, throws herself headlong into the most horrible afflictions. . . . Nothing could have been more naïve than Madame de Chasteller’s objections to all this, nor more tender than the tone in which they were said.

After conversations of this sort it always seemed utterly

impossible to Lucien that she had ever had an affair with the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Twenty-seventh Regiment of Hussars.

"My God! What wouldn't I give to have my father's flair and experience for one single day!"

Although ordinarily very well treated by Madame de Chasteller, and in his calmer moods believing himself loved by her, Lucien, nevertheless, always approached her with fear and trembling. He had never been able to get over a certain feeling of perturbation every time he rang her bell. He was never sure of the welcome he would receive. As soon as his eyes fell on the Hôtel de Pontlevé, even before arriving, he was no longer himself. For him the old porter was a fatal being, whom he could address only with bated breath.

Often when talking to Madame de Chasteller his words would become tangled on his tongue, a thing which never happened to him with anyone else. And this was the man Madame de Chasteller suspected of being a coxcomb and regarded with a bewilderment that equaled his. He was, for her, the absolute master of her happiness.

One evening Madame de Chasteller had an urgent letter to write.

"Here is a newspaper to while away your idle moments," she said, laughing and tossing him a copy of the *Débats*. She jumped up to fetch a closed escritoire which she then set on the table between Lucien and herself.

As she was opening the desk with a little key attached to her watch-chain, Lucien leaned over the table and kissed her hand.

Madame de Chasteller raised her head: she was no longer the same woman. "He might just as well have kissed my forehead," she thought. She bristled with offended modesty.

"I can never trust you, it would seem." And her eyes flashed

with sudden anger. "I not only receive you when I should have closed my door to you as to everyone else, but I allow you an intimacy that endangers my reputation, whose rules you might at least have respected (here her voice and entire bearing became even more withering); I treat you as a brother and ask you to read for a moment while I am writing an urgent letter and, in a most ill-timed and graceless way, you take advantage of my total lack of misgiving to indulge in a gesture that is, as a matter of fact, just as humiliating for you as it is for me! I have made a mistake, I should never have received you. Please go!"

In her manner and in her voice was all the firmness and all the coldness her pride could demand. Lucien saw this and was stunned.

This cowardice on his part strengthened Madame de Chasteller's courage. What he should have done was to rise, bow coldly, and say:

"Really, Madam, you exaggerate. One little indiscretion of no consequence, and perhaps a little silly on my part, and you turn it into a monstrous crime. I loved a woman as remarkable for her intelligence as for her beauty. At the moment I only find her pretty."

And with these words he should have picked up his sword, tranquilly put it on, and departed.

But far from thinking of such a course of action which he would have found too painful and too perilous, Lucien confined himself to falling into a state of despair at his dismissal. He had, it is true, risen, but he did not take his leave. He was very obviously trying to find a pretext for staying.

"I shall relinquish my place to you, sir," Madame de Chasteller continued with finished politeness which, by its coldness, seemed to accentuate the scorn she felt at his not leaving.

She closed her *escritoire*, preparing to take it to another room. Lucien, in a sudden access of anger, said to her:



"I beg your pardon, Madam, I forgot myself."

With that he left, overcome by rage both against himself and against her.

There had been nothing satisfactory about his behavior except those last words, but they had been entirely the result of impulse and not of art.

Once outside the unfortunate house, and free from the curious glances of the servants who were not accustomed to seeing him depart at such an early hour:

"It must be admitted," he said to himself, "that I am a small boy indeed to permit myself to be treated like that! I have only got all I deserved. When I am with her, instead of seeking to improve my position, I just sit and stare at her like a child. On my return from N—— there was a moment when it only depended on me to secure the most substantial privileges for myself. I could have induced her to say plainly that she loved me, and won the right to embrace her every time I arrived or departed. As it is I can't even kiss her hand! What a fool I am!"

Thus spoke Lucien to himself as he fled down the main street of Nancy, and continued with many another bitter self-reproach.

Full of contempt for himself, he still retained sense enough to say:

"Something must be done about it."

He looked forward to the evening with repugnance. For this was Madame de Marcilly's evening at home, and in that virtuous house, in the presence of a bust of Henri V, all the right-thinking heads of the city forgathered to discuss the day's news in the *Quotidienne* and lose thirty sous at whist.

Lucien felt that he was in no state of mind to act a part. He had the happy idea of going to see Madame d'Hocquincourt

instead. Of all provincial ladies that ever existed she was the most natural, and almost reconciled one to the provinces. Hers was a naturalness that would have been impossible in Paris, where her *stock would have gone down*.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

AH!" she cried on seeing him enter. "You make up my mind: I shan't go to Madame de Marcilly's."

And she called back the servant who had been sent to order her carriage.

"But how does it happen that you are not at the feet of the sublime Chasteller? Has there been a lovers' quarrel?"

Madame d'Hocquincourt scrutinized Lucien with a gay and knowing look.

"Ah, it's plain enough!" she cried merrily. "That contrite air betrays you. My misfortune is written all over those afflicted features, in that forced smile: I am nothing but a make-shift. Out with it! Tell me, since I am only a humble confidante, tell me all your troubles! Have you been driven away for some more amiable young man, or have you been driven away because you deserve it? But, first of all, you must tell me the truth if I am to console you."

Lucien had a great deal of difficulty in evading Madame d'Hocquincourt's questions. She was by no means lacking in wit, and this wit, being constantly at the service of a strong will and a passionate nature, had acquired all the idiosyncrasies of common sense. Lucien was too immersed in his anger at first to find a way to throw her off the scent. But the next minute, still rankling from the treatment he had received from Madame de Chasteller, he was very much surprised to hear

himself addressing the most gallant remarks, charming personal nothings to the young woman in an elegant negligee half-reclining on the couch with an air of keenest interest, not two feet away from him.

Such language on Lucien's lips had, for Madame d'Hocquincourt, all the advantage of novelty. He observed that, engaged in trying the effect of a charming pose in the long mirror of an adjacent wardrobe, she had stopped tormenting him on the subject of Madame de Chasteller. Lucien, whom misfortune had made Machiavellian, said to himself:

"The language of gallantry when one is tête-à-tête with a young woman who honors it by listening with an almost serious attention, must of necessity take on a bold, almost passionate tone."

We must admit that in reasoning thus Lucien felt the keenest pleasure in demonstrating to everyone that he was not a very small boy. During this time Madame d'Hocquincourt, for her own part, was making one discovery after another. She was beginning to find Lucien the most delightful man in the whole city of Nancy. This was all the more dangerous, considering the fact that M. d'Antin had already lasted more than eighteen months, an extremely long reign which had astonished everybody.

Happily for the tête-à-tête it was interrupted by the arrival of M. de Murcé. A tall thin young man, he carried his small head covered with very black hair proudly. Invariably taciturn at the beginning of a visit, his whole merit consisted in a gaiety that was perfectly natural and very comical because of its artlessness, but which began to display itself only after he had been an hour or two in gay company. He was essentially provincial but, nevertheless, very amiable. None of his quips would have passed muster in Paris but they were quite comical nonetheless, and became him very well.

Soon there appeared another habitué of the house, M. de Goëlle. He was a large man, pale and blond with a great deal of learning and very little wit, who listened to himself talk and said at least once a day that he was not yet forty, which was indeed true since he was something over thirty-nine. Moreover he was a cautious man; to answer yes to the simplest question, even to bring up a chair for anyone, were weighty matters taking a quarter of an hour for deliberation. When he finally made up his mind to action he affected the most childish kind of alacrity and impetuosity. He had been in love with Madame d'Hocquincourt for the past five or six years, kept hoping that his turn would come, and sometimes even tried to make newcomers believe that it had already come and gone.

One day at a tavern, Madame d'Hocquincourt, catching him assuming this role, said to him:

"You are a future, my poor darling, that pretends to be a past but that will never be a present." For she always "darlinged" her friends when on one of her witty flights, without, for all that, shocking anybody. It was plainly only the intimacy of a sprightly mood which is a thousand leagues removed from tender sentiments.

M. de Goëlle's arrival was followed at short intervals by four or five young men.

"Here we have all that is best and gayest in town," said Lucien to himself as he watched them enter one after the other.

"I have just come from Madame de Marcilly's," said one of them. "They are all gloomy there and pretend to be even gloomier than they are!"

"It's what happened at N—— that makes them so cheerful."

"As for me," said another, annoyed at the way Madame d'Hocquincourt sat gazing at Lucien, "I decided that if I failed

to find Madame d'Hocquincourt, or Madame de Puylaurens, or Madame de Chasteller at home, there was nothing for it but to drown my evening in a bottle of champagne. And that is the course I would have pursued had I found Madame d'Hocquincourt's door closed to the common herd."

"But my poor T eran," retorted Madame d'Hocquincourt at this malicious thrust at Lucien, "one doesn't threaten to get drunk, one gets drunk. You should have sense enough to see the difference."

"Nothing, it is true, is more difficult than to know how to drink," insisted Go ello, the pedant. (It was a critical moment.)

"What are we going to do? What are we going to do?" cried Murc e and one of the Roller brothers in the same breath.

This was the question everyone was asking without anyone finding the answer, when M. d'Antin appeared. At the sight of his jovial air all faces brightened immediately. He was a tall blond young man of twenty-eight or thirty. It was utterly impossible for him to assume a serious or solemn air, and were he ever to announce that the street was on fire it would most certainly not be with a lugubrious face. He was a very good-looking man, but at times one might have objected to a somewhat vacuous, stupid expression on his charming face, like that of a man beginning to get drunk. When you knew him this was only an added charm. As a matter of fact, he was quite devoid of sense but had the best heart in the world and an unbelievable fund of gaiety. He had just managed to run through a large fortune which his miserly father had left him three or four years before. He had deserted Paris, or rather he had been driven from that city for indulging in certain pleasantries on the subject of an august personage. He was absolutely unique as an organizer of all kinds of amusing parties, for wherever he appeared dullness fled. Unfortunately

Madame d'Hocquincourt was familiar with all his gifts by now, and the element of surprise, so essential to her happiness, was no longer operative. M. de Goëlle, who had heard Madame d'Hocquincourt remark as much, was teasing M. d'Antin with heavy wit about his no longer being able to contrive anything new, when Count de Vassigny entered.

"There is only one thing for you to do if you want to last, my dear d'Antin," said M. de Vassigny. "You must turn sensible!"

"I should bore myself! I haven't the courage! I shall have plenty of time to be serious when I am completely ruined. Then, to bore myself in a useful fashion, I shall plunge into politics and the secret societies in honor of Henri V who is my very own king. Will you promise me your support? Meanwhile, gentlemen, as you all seem so serious, still numbed apparently by the amiability of the Hôtel Marcilly, let's play faro—that Italian game I taught you the other day. M. de Vassigny, who does not know the game, will deal. Then Goëlle cannot accuse me of arranging the rules for my benefit! Who knows how to play faro?"

"I do," said Lucien.

"Good! So, will you be so kind as to coach M. de Vassigny and to see that he follows the rules of the game. You, Roller, will be croupier."

"I," replied Roller coldly, "will be nothing—for I am leaving."

The truth was that Count Roller could see that Lucien, whom he had never before met at Madame d'Hocquincourt's, was going to play a most agreeable role this evening, and as that was something he could not stomach, he took his departure.

A good part of Nancy society, especially the younger men, detested Lucien. He had the dubious advantage of having

made two or three rejoinders which even to them seemed witty, and had thereby turned them into enemies for life.

"After our game," continued d'Antin, "at midnight when you are all ruined, we shall, like perfectly respectable people, go to supper at the *Grande Chaumière*." (This was the best tavern of Nancy, situated in the garden of a former Carthusian monastery.)

"I agree," said Madame d'Hocquincourt, "provided it's a *Dutch treat*."

"Naturally," said d'Antin. "And as M. Lafiteau, who has excellent champagne, and M. Piebot, the only ice-dealer in Nancy, may be going to bed, I shall, in the name of the *Dutch treat*, see that there is wine and that it is properly chilled. I'll have it all sent over to the *Grande Chaumière*. In the meanwhile, M. Leuwen, here are a hundred francs. Please do me the honor of playing for me, and try not to seduce Madame d'Hocquincourt or I shall take my revenge and go straight to the Hôtel de Pontlevé to denounce you."

Everybody followed M. d'Antin's instructions obediently, even that inveterate politician, Vassigny. The game started and after half an hour everyone was very much excited. That is what d'Antin had counted on to chase away the inclination to yawn they had acquired at Madame de Marcilly's.

"I'll throw my cards out of the window," cried Madame d'Hocquincourt, "if anyone punts more than five francs. Do you want to make a queen of gamblers out of me?"

D'Antin returned, and at half-past twelve they left for the *Grande Chaumière*. A little flowering orange tree, the only one of its kind in Nancy, had been placed in the center of the table. The wine was chilled to perfection. The supper was very gay, no one got drunk, and at three o'clock in the morning they all parted the best friends in the world.

And it is in this way that a woman loses her reputation in

the provinces, a thing that worried Madame d'Hocquincourt not the least in the world. Getting up the next morning, she went to see her husband, who embraced her, saying:

"You are quite right to enjoy yourself, my poor child, if you have the courage. Do you know what happened at X—? That king we all hate so much is losing ground, and after him will arrive the Republic which will chop off his head and ours too."

"His head? Ah, no! He is far too clever. And as for you, I'll carry you off across the Rhine."

Lucien had prolonged his stay at the Hôtel d'Hocquincourt as long as possible, leaving with the last of his companions of the evening and attaching himself to the little group, which grew smaller at each street corner as each member took the direction of his house; finally he accompanied the last one, who lived the farthest away, all the way to his door. He talked a great deal and felt a mortal terror of being left alone. For, at the Hôtel d'Hocquincourt, while listening to the stories and jests of these gentlemen, and trying by well-timed remarks to maintain the position that Madame d'Hocquincourt seemed inclined to accord him and which was not that of a small boy, he had made a resolution for the next day.

He would *not* go to the Hôtel de Pontlevé. And right away he began to suffer.

"But it is important to maintain one's honor and if I give in now I shall soon see that preference, which it is evident at times she feels for me, change to contempt. And besides, God knows what new insult she has ready for me if I go to see her tomorrow."

These two thoughts, occurring in quick succession, became torture to him.

The next day arrived all too quickly and with it the cruel



sensation of the happiness he was to be deprived of by not going to the Hôtel de Pontlevé. Everything seemed insipid, colorless, odious by comparison with the delicious perturbation he would feel in that little library, beside that little mahogany table where she always sat working as she listened to him. The decision to present himself after all was enough to change his whole frame of mind.

"For," he added, "if I don't go this evening how am I to present myself tomorrow? (In his mortal perplexity he had recourse to cant.) Do I really want to have the house closed to me? And for such nonsense! Besides, perhaps I was really to blame. I might ask permission to go to Metz for a few days. . . . But I should be punishing myself. I should die of despair."

On the other hand, had not Madame de Chasteller, with her exaggerated idea of feminine delicacy, wanted to make him understand that he should simply make his calls less frequent, limit them, for example, to one visit a week? By presenting himself so soon at a house from which he had been so summarily dismissed, would he not expose himself to Madame de Chasteller's redoubled wrath and moreover give her just cause for complaint? He knew how susceptible she was on the subject of what she called the deference due to her sex. It is true that in her struggle against her feelings for Lucien, Madame de Chasteller, distressed at being so little able to count on her most sternly formed resolutions, was often irritated with herself and, in consequence, would pick quite unwarrantable quarrels with him.

With a little more experience of life, these unreasonable quarrels on the part of a woman as intelligent as Madame de Chasteller and one whose natural modesty and sense of justice usually kept her from exaggerating other people's faults, would have made Lucien realize how torn by con-

flict was that heart he was engaged in besieging. But Lucien's patriotic soul had always despised love and knew nothing of the very necessary art of making love. Until chance had placed Madame de Chasteller in his way, and an access of vanity had made the idea that the prettiest young woman of the city should have reason to laugh at him unendurable, he had always said to himself:

"What would be thought of a man who, during an eruption of Vesuvius, should be wholly taken up with playing cup-and-ball?"

This imposing illustration has the advantage of summing up Lucien's character and the character of the best of the young men of his generation. When love had come to take the place of that sterner sentiment, duty to the fatherland, in the heart of this young Roman, all that remained of his sense of duty was transformed into a sense of honor—badly understood.

In Lucien's present position, the most insignificant young man of eighteen, provided he had a soul barren enough and that contempt for women which is so fashionable today, would have said to himself: "What could be simpler than to go to see Madame de Chasteller without seeming to attach the slightest importance to what happened yesterday, without showing any sign that one even remembers her little outburst of temper, but prepared to make all due amends in the way of excuses and then to begin speaking of something else if Madame de Chasteller should still seem inclined to give importance to the heinous crime of kissing her hand."

But Lucien was very far from harboring any such ideas. From the point of view of common sense and in our present state of moral decrepitude, it takes quite an effort, I admit, for us to understand the frightful battles raging in our hero's soul and, after that, not to laugh:

Toward evening Lucien, no longer able to remain quiet, was pacing with restless step along a deserted part of the ramparts not a hundred paces from the Hôtel de Pontlevé. Like Tancred he was battling phantoms and needed all his courage. He was more undecided than ever when a certain clock close by which he always heard from Madame de Chasteller's little library, began striking half-past seven with all the quarters and half-quarters with which the hours are surrounded in the German clocks of the East of France.

The sound of this clock settled it! Without realizing why, there came to him the poignant recollection of his state of happiness on the evenings when he heard those quarters and half-quarters, and he was seized with a profound disgust for the sad, painful, egotistical feelings that had been afflicting him ever since the day before. Walking slowly along that melancholy stretch of rampart, all men had appeared to him in a mean and sordid light. Life had seemed arid and stripped of all joy, of everything that made life worth living. But at the sound of the clock, electrified by the thought of that community of sentiment uniting two great and generous souls with scarcely the need of words, he quickly turned his steps toward the Hôtel de Pontlevé.

He was hurrying past the porter's wife when she stopped him:

"Where are you going, sir?" she cried in a tremulous little voice, getting up from her spinning wheel as though to run after him. "Madam has gone out."

"What!" exclaimed Lucien. "Gone out! She has gone out?" And he stood there as though petrified.

The porter's wife mistook his attitude for one of incredulity. "She left almost an hour ago," she explained with an air of candor, for she liked Lucien. "You can see for yourself, the carriage house is open and the coupé isn't there."

Lucien fled at these words, and two minutes later was once more on the rampart. He looked down at the muddy moat without seeing it, and beyond it at the desolate, arid plain.

"A pretty maneuver that was, to be sure! She despises me . . . and to show it she intentionally goes out an hour before the time she is in the habit of receiving me every day. Just punishment for my cowardliness! This should be a lesson to me for the future. If I haven't the courage to resist temptation while in the same city, then I must ask permission to go to Metz. Certainly I'll suffer, but no one will be able to see into my heart, and distance will save me from the possibility of committing more blunders like this one which is a stain on a man's honor. Forget this proud woman . . . After all, I am not a colonel. This is worse than folly on my part. To persist in struggling against my lack of rank is a proof of utter insensibility."

He flew home, saw to the harnessing of his calash himself, all the while cursing the slowness of the coachman, and had himself driven to Madame de Serpierre's. Madame was out, and her door was closed.

"Evidently all doors are closed to me today."

He climbed into the driver's seat and drove himself at a gallop to the *Green Huntsman*. The Serpierre ladies were not there. He rushed furiously through all the alleys of its beautiful garden. The German musicians were drinking at a nearby tavern. Catching sight of Lucien, they ran after him.

"Sir, O sir! Do you want us to play those Mozart duets?"

"Of course."

He paid them, jumped into his carriage, and drove back to Nancy.

He was received at Madame de Commercy's where he displayed an edifying gravity. He played two rubbers of whist

with M. Rey, Grand Vicar of the Bishop of Nancy, without his cantankerous old partner's being able to reproach him for a moment's inattention.

## CHAPTER THIRTY

**A**FTER TWO RUBBERS of whist, which seemed to him endless, Lucien was in addition called upon to take sides in a dispute over an incident which had occurred that morning: one of the priests of the city had refused to allow the funeral of a certain shoemaker to take place in his church.

Lucien was listening to this disgusting story without paying much attention when the Vicar exclaimed:

"Although he is in the service, I ask for no better judge than M. Leuwen."

"It is precisely because I am in the service and not *although*," Lucien retorted, "that I have the honor to beg the Grand Vicar to say nothing that might force me to give a disagreeable reply."

"But, my dear sir, there were four grounds against this man: as a purchaser of national property, holder of . . . , for being married by the state only, and refusing a proper marriage on his deathbed."

"You are forgetting a fifth, sir: paying his part of the tax that provides your salary and mine."

And with that Lucien departed.

A few more retorts of the sort would have ruined the good reputation he had acquired, but this one was really to the point.

Nevertheless, the remark would certainly in the end have

hastened his ruin or, at least, it would have lost him half of the consideration he enjoyed in Nancy had he been destined to stay much longer in that city.

As he was leaving, he ran into his friend Dr. Du Poirier who buttonholed him and, willy-nilly, carried him off for a walk on the Place d'Armes to finish explaining to him his system for the restoration of France. The civil code, with its equal partition of the estate on the decease of the head of the family, will result in the subdivision of the land to infinity. The population will increase but it will be a paupered population without bread. The great religious orders, of necessity, must be re-established in France. Holding enormous properties, they would make for the greater happiness of a limited number of peasants required for the cultivation of those vast domains.

"Believe me, sir, there is nothing more disastrous than an over-numerous and over-educated population. . . ."

Lucien behaved admirably.

"It sounds plausible," he replied. . . . "There is much to be said. . . . I am not sufficiently versed in these weighty matters. . . ."

He put forward several objections, but finally appeared to admit the doctor's general principles.

"But does this old rascal really believe what he is saying?" he wondered as he listened, at the same time examining attentively that large head with its deeply lined face. "I seem to recognize, underneath, the clever scheming of a pettifogging lawyer from Lower Normandy, not the goodnatured simplicity capable of believing in all this humbug. Besides one cannot deny that this man has a keen intelligence, the gift of persuasion, and the art of getting the best possible conclusions from the worst possible premises, the most gratuitous assumptions. His manners are coarse, but being a clever man and one who understands his century, far from trying to correct

this coarseness he revels in it; it constitutes his originality, his mission and his force. He seems to exaggerate it intentionally. These provincial nobles need have no fear that it would ever be mistaken for their noble haughtiness. The stupidest of them are able to say: 'What a difference between this man and me!' and swallow more readily all the doctor's humbug. If he succeeds in triumphing over 1830, they will make him a minister, he will be their Corbière.

"But there's nine o'clock striking already," cried Lucien suddenly. "Good-by, my dear doctor, I must leave you and your sublime arguments which will lead you to the Chamber one of these days and which you will end up by making fashionable. You are really a man of superior eloquence and persuasion, but I must go now and pay my court to Madame d'Hocquincourt."

"That is to say, Madame de Chasteller. Don't think you can fool me, young man!"

And Dr. Du Poirier, before going to bed, visited five or six more noble families to find out, as usual, everybody's business, to direct them, to help them understand the simplest things with, of course, due regard to their vanity, mentioning at least once a week each one's ancestors, or, when there was nothing better to do or when carried away by enthusiasm, preaching his doctrine of the re-establishment of the great monastic orders.

At one house he would decide what day the washing should be done, at another . . . And he always decided for the best since he had good common sense, much sagacity, and a great deal of respect for money, besides being quite free from passion in regard to the washing. . . .

Whilst the doctor was engaged in talking washing, etc., Lucien, holding his head high, was walking with a firm step and the intrepid look of resignation and true courage.

He was satisfied with the way he was fulfilling his duty. He went directly to Madame d'Hocquincourt's, or "Madame d'Hocquin," as her Nancy friends familiarly called her.

He found M. de Serpierre and M. de Vassigny there, everlastingly talking politics. M. de Serpierre was explaining at length, and unfortunately with proofs, how much better things had been before the Revolution, at the Intendancy of Metz under M. de Calonne, later the famous Minister.

"That courageous magistrate," said M. de Serpierre, "who succeeded in prosecuting the wretched La Chalotais, the first of the Jacobins. That was in 1779. . . ."

Lucien leaned over towards Madame d'Hocquincourt and said gravely:

What language, Madame, both for you and for me!

She burst out laughing, much to the annoyance of M. de Serpierre:

"You must know, sir . . ." he continued, addressing Lucien. . . .

"My God," thought Lucien, "this is my cue! It was written that I should fall from the frying pan into the fire, from Du Poirier to Serpierre!"

"You must know, sir," continued M. de Serpierre in a thundering voice, "that these gentlemen of the petty nobility, or related to them, had the tallage and capitation tax of their protégés reduced, as well as their own land-tax. Do you know that whenever I went to Metz there was no other inn for me, as for all the first families of Lorraine, but the Hôtel de l'Intendance of M. Calonne? And there you would be sure to find a sumptuous table, charming women, the first officers of the garrison, gaming-tables and perfect manners! Instead of which you now have a dreary little prefect in a shabby suit who dines alone and badly, that is, if he dines at all!"



"God!" thought Lucien, "this man is an even worse bore than Du Poirier."

Hoping to bring the harangue to an end, he made only vaguely admiring gestures by way of reply, and the slight attention he paid to what he heard and what he said, once more left free scope to all his amorous thoughts.

"It is evident," he decided, "that without appearing the most abject of men, I can no longer present myself at Madame de Chasteller's. All is over between us. The most I can allow myself is a formal call from time to time. In other words, I have received my dismissal. My enemies, the Roller brothers, my rival, her tall cousin M. de Blancet who dines five nights a week at the Hôtel de Pontlevé and takes tea with father and daughter every evening, will all of them soon learn of my disgrace. Look out for their contempt then, my fine gentleman of the charming yellow liveries and mettlesome horses! All those whose windowpanes have trembled at the clatter of your carriage wheels, that shake the very pavements, will vie with each other in celebrating your ridiculous disgrace. You will sink low indeed, my poor friend! Perhaps you will be hooted out of the Nancy which you so despised. A nice way for a city to remain engraved on one's memory!"

All the while that he was immersed in these pleasant reflections, his eyes were fixed on the lovely shoulders of Madame d'Hocquincourt which a summer bodice, newly arrived from Paris the day before, left generously uncovered. Suddenly a brilliant idea occurred to him:

"Behold my buckler against ridicule! Now for the attack!"

He leaned over toward Madame d'Hocquincourt and said softly:

"What he thinks of M. de Calonne whom he mourns so bitterly, is just what I think about our lovely tête-à-tête of the other evening. It was really gauche of me not to take advantage of the serious attention I seemed to read in your

eyes, to try to divine whether or not you would accept me for your adorer."

"Try to make me mad over you, I do not object," rejoined Madame d'Hocquincourt simply and coolly. She gazed at him in silence with great attention and a philosophic little pout that was altogether charming. Her beauty was heightened at this moment by a delicious air of grave impartiality, which she allowed to have its effect before adding:

"But, since what you ask is not a duty—quite the contrary, until I am mad about you, but raving mad, expect nothing of me."

The rest of their conversation in lowered tones was pursued in the same vein as this auspicious beginning.

M. de Serpierre still endeavored to engage Lucien in his discussion, having been accustomed to the greatest deference on the latter's part whenever they met at Madame de Chasteller's. At last he could not fail to understand, from Madame d'Hocquincourt's smiles, that Lucien's attention was nothing but painful politeness. The venerable old man decided to fall back entirely on M. de Vassigny, and the two gentlemen began pacing the drawing room from one end to the other.

Lucien was as cool and collected as possible. He made every effort to become intoxicated by that skin, so white and fresh, and those voluptuous curves almost directly under his eyes. But all the time he was admiring them, he could still hear Vassigny replying to his companion and trying to inculcate Du Poirier's ideas on the great religious orders and the inexpediency of the partition of estates and of too large a population.

The political promenade of the two gentlemen and Lucien's gallant conversation had lasted about a quarter of an hour when Lucien began to notice that Madame d'Hocquincourt was by no means indifferent to the tender remarks he

was improvising with the laborious aid of his memory, and the lady's obvious interest at once inspired new ideas and words which were not without grace. They expressed what he felt.

"What a difference between this pleasant courteous air, full of sympathy, with which she listens to me and what I meet elsewhere! And those round arms gleaming through transparent gauze, those lovely shoulders that caress the eyes with their soft whiteness! Nothing like that with the other one! A haughty air, a severe expression, and a dress all the way up to the neck! And worse still, a taste for officers of high rank. Here I, a lowly second-lieutenant, am made to feel that I am the equal of everybody at the least."

Lucien's wounded vanity made him feel keenly the pleasure of success. In the heat of their colloquy M. de Serpierre and M. de Vassigny often paused at the other end of the drawing room, and Lucien, taking every advantage of these instants of complete freedom, was listened to with tender admiration.

The two gentlemen had been standing still at the far end of the room for some minutes, halted evidently by M. de Vassigny's striking arguments in favor of vast domains and large-scale cultivation so advantageous to the nobility, when, not two feet away from Madame d'Hocquincourt, suddenly Madame de Chasteller appeared. With her light and youthful step, she had entered immediately following the announcement of her name, which nobody had heard.

It was impossible for her not to read in Madame d'Hocquincourt's eyes, and even in Lucien's, the untimeliness of her arrival. She immediately began talking with great vivacity and volubility in a high-pitched tone of voice, about things she had observed on her round of visits that evening. The result was that Madame d'Hocquincourt was not put in an embarrassing position. Never had Lucien seen Madame de

Chasteller like this, bubbling over with gossip, even malicious gossip.

"I should never have forgiven her," he said to himself, "if she had assumed a virtuous air and tried to embarrass that poor little d'Hocquincourt. She saw very well that my talent for seduction was beginning to have an effect."

In saying this Lucien was almost half serious.

Madame de Chasteller spoke to him as freely and gracefully as usual. She said nothing very remarkable but, thanks to her, the conversation was lively, even brilliant, for nothing is more amusing than gossip if retailed with wit.

Monsieur de Serpierre and M. de Vassigny had abandoned their politics and come back to Lucien's group, attracted by the charms of slander. Lucien assumed his share in the conversation.

"She must not think that I am in despair because she has closed her door to me."

But as he talked and tried to be agreeable, he entirely forgot the very existence of Madame d'Hocquincourt. In spite of his gay and detached manner, his chief occupation was observing, out of the corner of his eye, whether his clever remarks met with any success with Madame de Chasteller.

"What miracles my father would have accomplished in my place," thought Lucien, "in a conversation like this directed toward one person but to be understood by another! He would even succeed in making it satiric or flattering for a third! With the same remark I should be able to affect Madame de Chasteller while continuing to pay court to Madame d'Hocquincourt."

This was the only time he thought of the latter and only, moreover, in relation to his admiration for his father's wit.

As for Madame de Chasteller, her sole concern was trying to discover if Lucien had noticed how painful it had been

for her to find him talking to Madame d'Hocquincourt with such an air of intimacy.

"I wish I knew whether he went to my house before coming here," she thought.

Little by little many more people arrived: MM. de Murcé, de Sanréal, Roller, de Lanfort and a few others unknown to the reader and really, to tell the truth, not worth introducing. They talked too loudly and gesticulated like actors. Soon Madame de Puylaurens appeared, and finally M. d'Antin himself.

In spite of herself, Madame de Chasteller kept watching the eyes of her brilliant rival. She noticed that while Madame d'Hocquincourt was greeting all her callers and making a quick tour of the room, her eyes invariably returned to Lucien and seemed to contemplate him with lively interest.

"Or rather, they are asking him to amuse her," said Madame de Chasteller to herself. "It is simply that M. Leuwen arouses her curiosity more than M. d'Antin. Her feelings go no further than that *for today*. But with a woman of her temperament, indecision never lasts long."

Rarely had Madame de Chasteller displayed such quick discernment. A budding jealousy that evening made her older than her years.

When the conversation became very animated and Madame de Chasteller felt that she could safely remain silent, her face clouded. Suddenly it cleared again as she thought:

"M. Leuwen does not talk to Madame d'Hocquincourt in the tone one uses toward a person one loves."

In order to avoid the civilities of the new arrivals, Madame de Chasteller went over to a table covered with a profusion of cartoons, satirizing the existing order. Lucien stopped talking. She noticed it with delight.

"Am I right?" she asked herself. "And yet what a difference between my severity which borders on prudishness, the result of my serious character, and the vivacity and unconstraint

and the natural and ever-changing attractions of that brilliant little d'Hocquincourt. She has, it is true, had too many lovers but, after all, is that any drawback in the eyes of a second-lieutenant twenty-three years of age? And one who has such singular opinions? Besides, I wonder if he knows it?"

Lucien kept moving about the drawing room from one group to another. He was emboldened in this restlessness seeing that everybody was occupied with the news that a camp of cavalry had been established at Lunéville. This fresh subject for gossip made everybody forget Lucien and the signal attention paid him that evening by Madame d'Hocquincourt. On his part, he was equally oblivious of the people present. If he thought of them at all it was only to dread their curious glances. He was dying to go up to the table of caricatures, but feared that this would show an unpardonable lack of dignity.

"Even perhaps a lack of proper respect for Madame de Chasteller," he added bitterly. "She wished to avoid me at her house, and I take advantage of the fact of her presence in the same drawing room to compel her to listen to me!"

While finding this argument unanswerable, Lucien in a few moments found himself so near the table over which Madame de Chasteller was bending, that to ignore her would have been noticeably rude.

"It would seem like pique," Lucien said to himself. "And that is just what I want to avoid."

He blushed outrageously. The poor boy at that moment had lost all notion of the rules of fashionable behavior, they had vanished; he had forgotten them.

Madame de Chasteller, laying down one of the caricatures to take up another, raised her eyes slightly and noticed Lucien's flushed face. It was not without its effect. Across the room, Madame d'Hocquincourt saw plainly all that was going on beside the green table, and M. d'Antin's efforts at that mo-

ment to entertain her with an amusing story seemed to her unbearably tiresome.

Lucien at last summoned courage enough to raise his eyes to Madame de Chasteller, but he trembled with the fear of meeting hers and of being forced to speak at once. She seemed to be studying an engraving but with a haughty and almost angry expression. The poor woman had just had the unheard-of idea of taking Lucien's hand which was resting on the table, while the other held a cartoon, and of lifting it to her lips. This impulse filled her with consternation and unspeakable anger against herself. . . .

"And in my arrogance I sometimes dare blame Madame d'Hocquincourt!" she thought. "Only a moment ago I dared to despise her. But I am perfectly sure that no such infamous temptation has ever occurred to her all evening. God! Wherever can such horrible ideas come from?"

"I must clear up all this," Lucien said to himself, rather shocked by her distant air, "and then not think of it any longer."

"Is it possible, Madam, that I am unfortunate enough to have inspired your anger once more? If that is so, I shall leave you instantly."

She raised her eyes and could not help smiling at him very tenderly.

"By no means, sir," she said as soon as she was able to speak. "I was merely annoyed at myself for a stupid idea that came to me."

"My God! What am I about? Am I going to confess to him . . . that would be the last straw!"

She grew suddenly so red that Madame d'Hocquincourt, who had never taken her eyes off the two of them, said to herself:

"So, now they are reconciled, and closer than ever. As a

matter of fact, if they dared, they would fall into each other's arms." Lucien was about to move away. Noticing it, Madame de Chasteller said to him:

"No, do stay where you are, beside me. But for the moment I really cannot speak."

And her eyes filled with tears. She leaned down over the table, looking fixedly at an engraving.

"Ah!" thought Madame d'Hocquincourt. "Now we have reached the stage of tears."

Lucien was utterly amazed and said to himself:

"Is it love? Is it hate? It can hardly be indifference, it seems to me. All the more reason to clear things up and have done with it."

"You inspire me with such fear that I dare not reply," he said with a look of sincere distress.

"And what could you have to say to me?" she rejoined with dignity.

"That you love me, my angel. Only say it, and I swear that I will never take advantage of it."

Madame de Chasteller was on the verge of saying: "Yes, it is true, but have pity on me!" Just then Madame d'Hocquincourt, who had come quickly across the room, brushed against the table with her stiffly starched skirt of English muslin, and it was thanks to this rustling sound alone that Madame de Chasteller became aware of her presence. A tenth of a second more and she would have made her confession to Lucien within hearing of Madame d'Hocquincourt.

"God! how frightful!" she thought. "What terrible disgrace is in store for me this evening? If I raise my eyes, Madame d'Hocquincourt, and he himself, and everybody else will see that I am in love with him. Ah! what imprudence my coming here this evening! There is but one thing for me to do, even if I die on the spot, and that is to stay where



I am without moving, without speaking. Perhaps then I shall succeed in doing nothing for which I should have to blush."

Madame de Chasteller's eyes indeed remained fastened on the engraving as she continued to bend low over the table.

Madame d'Hocquincourt waited an instant for Madame de Chasteller to notice her, but her malice went no further. It never even occurred to her to address some facetious remark to her rival that would force her to raise her eyes and make a spectacle of herself. She even forgot Madame de Chasteller completely, having eyes for no one but Lucien. She found him irresistible at that moment: his eyes wore a tender expression but at the same time there was a little air of obstinacy about him. This obstinate air in a man, unless she could make fun of it, was fatal to Madame d'Hocquincourt and invariably decided the victory.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

MADAME DE CHASTELLER had forgotten her love to think of nothing but safeguarding her reputation. She now turned her whole attention to the general conversation.

The camp of Lunéville and its probable consequences (nothing less than the immediate fall of the usurping power which had had the imprudence to order its establishment) still occupied the attention of everyone. But they were reduced to repeating opinions and facts that had already been reiterated over and over again: the cavalry could be counted on with more certainty than the infantry, etc., etc.

"Such endless repetition," thought Madame de Chasteller, "will soon irritate Madame de Puylaurens, and in order not

to die of boredom, she will soon take sides. If I sit near her, in the rays of her glory, I shall be able to listen without talking, and, above all, M. Leuwen will not be able to talk to me."

Madame de Chasteller crossed the room without meeting Lucien. This was a great point gained. If that handsome young man had been endowed with a little natural talent, he would have obtained an avowal of love and the promise of being received every day of his life.

Everyone knew of Madame de Chasteller's admiration for Madame de Puylaurens' wit. She took a seat near Madame de Puylaurens who was describing the unseemly neglect and the boring solitude which were going to be the fate of the prince deserted by good society in the vicinity.

Having taken refuge in this safe harbor, Madame de Chasteller, who felt herself on the verge of tears and in no state to meet Lucien's glance, laughed a great deal at Madame de Puylaurens' witty way of ridiculing everything connected with the camp at Lunéville.

Now that she had escaped from her awkward predicament and had recovered from the terror which had made her oblivious of everything else, Madame de Chasteller noticed that Madame d'Hocquincourt never left Lucien's side for a moment. She seemed to be trying to induce him to talk, but, even at that distance, Madame de Chasteller thought she could see that Lucien remained taciturn.

"Is he shocked by the ridicule being heaped on the prince he serves? But he has told me a hundred times that he is not in the service of any prince; that he serves his country; and that he finds absurd the pretension of the first magistrate in calling the profession of soldier *being in his service*. M. Leuwen even goes so far as to say: '*And that is what I intend to show him by helping to dethrone him if he continues to violate his promises, that is, if we can find a thousand citizens*

*who think as we do!*" \* These thoughts were accompanied by a thrill of admiration for her lover, otherwise all these political details would have been quickly forgotten. Lucien had made her the sacrifice of his liberalism and she had sacrificed her ultraism for his sake. On that score they had long been in perfect accord.

"This silence of his—" continued Madame de Chasteller to herself, "does it not mean that he wants to show his indifference to the marked favor Madame d'Hocquincourt is showing him? He must feel very ill-treated by me. I wonder if he is unhappy. Could I be the cause?"

Madame de Chasteller hardly dared believe it, but her attention redoubled. It is true that Lucien barely spoke, his words had to be dragged out of him. His vanity warned him: "It is possible that Madame de Chasteller is making sport of you. If that is true soon all Nancy will follow suit. And perhaps Madame d'Hocquincourt is in the conspiracy! If that is so, I must not appear to have pretensions until the day after the victory. And here are forty persons who (if they give me a thought) may be watching me. In any case my enemies will not fail to say that I am courting Madame d'Hocquincourt to mask my discomfiture over my failure with Bathilde. I must show these malicious provincials that it is she who is running after me, and therefore I won't utter another word for the rest of the evening. I shall even go so far as to be impolite."

This capriciousness on Lucien's part only tended to increase that of Madame d'Hocquincourt. She had no longer either eyes or ears for d'Antin and told him more than once in a very curt tone and as though in a hurry to be rid of him: "My dear d'Antin, how boring you are tonight!"

And she would return quickly to the consideration of this absorbing problem:

\* This is a Jacobin speaking.

"Something must have shocked Leuwen. This silence is not natural in him. But what could I have done to displease him?"

As Lucien did not go near Madame de Chasteller, Madame d'Hocquincourt readily concluded that everything was over between them. Besides, she owed to a naturally happy disposition this marked difference from provincials in general, that she paid very little attention to other people's affairs. However, by way of compensation she pursued with unbelievable diligence any mad plan that happened to pop into her giddy head. The one she harbored in regard to Lucien was facilitated by the solemn circumstance that the following day was Friday. For M. d'Hocquincourt, a pious young man of twenty-eight with lovely chestnut mustaches, in order not to participate in the profanation of this day of penitence, had gone to bed long before midnight. The moment he retired Madame d'Hocquincourt ordered punch and champagne served.

"They say that my handsome lieutenant likes to get tipsy. He must be a pretty spectacle in that state. We shall now find out!"

But Lucien never deviated from a fatuity worthy of his native land. During the entire evening he did not condescend to say three words in succession; that was the only spectacle he offered Madame d'Hocquincourt. She was amazed beyond all bounds and, in the end, entranced.

"What an astonishing creature, and at twenty-three!" she thought. "How different from all the others!"

At the very same moment the partner of this silent duet was thinking: "With these provincial nobles it is impossible to exaggerate. One must lay it on with a heavy hand."

The stupidity of the arguments he heard concerning the camp of Lunéville, which was going to result, it seemed,

in the fall of the King, did not offend him because of the uniform he was wearing, but once or twice it wrung from him a kind of ejaculatory prayer:

"Dear God! by what ill chance have I been thrown into such dull company? And one which, if it were more intelligent, would be only more malicious! What could be more stupid and meanly bourgeois? What a ferocious passion for anything connected with money! And these are the progeny of the conquerors of Charles the Bold!"

Such were his thoughts as he gravely drank glass after glass of champagne which Madame d'Hocquincourt took such keen delight in pouring out for him.

"Isn't there something I can do to ruffle that haughty manner?" she asked herself.

And Lucien's thoughts ran on:

"The servants of these people, after two years of war in a regiment commanded by a conscientious, decent colonel, would be a hundred times better men than their masters. You will find in them a sincere devotion to something. The most ridiculous thing about these aristocrats is that they are always prating about *devotion*, yet it is the last thing they are capable of."

Such egotistical, philosophical and political thoughts, quite false perhaps, were Lucien's only resource at moments when Madame de Chasteller made him miserable. What had turned Lucien into a philosophical second-lieutenant, that is to say sad and rather dull under the effect of the champagne, admirably chilled in accord with the fashion of the day, was this fatal idea which began to dawn on him:

"After what I had the audacity to say to Madame de Chasteller, after that expression *my angel*, so crudely familiar (in fact when I speak to her I have no sense, I should write down what I want to say; what woman, no matter how indulgent,

would not take offense at being called *my angel*, especially when she does not respond in the same way?) after that expression, so woefully imprudent, the very first word she says to me now will decide my fate. She will dismiss me, I shall never see her again. . . . I shall be forced to see Madame d'Hocquincourt. And how tired I'll get of her persistent attentions, so unremitting and so immoderate, and I shall have to put up with them every evening. If I approach Madame de Chasteller now, my fate will be decided at once. And I should be unable to reply. Besides, she may still be in the first transports of anger. What if she says: 'I shall not be at home until the fifteenth of the month'?"

The thought made Lucien shudder.

"Well, let us at least save our reputation. I must simply redouble my fatuous attitude toward this petty nobility. They can't hate me any more than they do already, and these base souls will respect me in proportion to my insolence." \*

At that moment one of the Rollers said to M. de Sanr  al, already fairly excited by the punch:

"Come along. I'm going over to that coxcomb and tell him a thing or two about his King Louis-Philippe!"

But at that precise second the German clock which had such power over Lucien's heart began to strike one o'clock in the morning with all its chimes. In spite of her love of late hours, Madame de Puylaurens rose to go, and all the rest of the company followed her example. Thus, our hero was not put to the necessity of demonstrating his courage that night.

"If I offer Madame de Chasteller my arm she may pronounce that decisive word."

He stood motionless by the door and watched her as she

\* A coxcomb speaking.

passed him, very pale and with downcast eyes, on the arm of her cousin M. de Blancet.

"And this," thought Lucien as he traversed the lonely, filthy streets of Nancy on his way to his lodgings, "is the foremost nation of the universe! My God! what must it be like to spend one's evenings in the little towns of Russia, Germany, or England! What meannesses! What coldly atrocious cruelties! In those countries the privileged class openly wields power, while here, I find it half-numbed and checkmated by being banished from the Budget. My father is right; one should live in Paris and see only people who know how to enjoy themselves. They are happy and for that reason less malevolent. Man's soul is a fetid bog, if one doesn't cross it quickly one is submerged."

One word from Madame de Chasteller would have transformed these philosophical thoughts into paroxysms of happiness. An unhappy man looks to philosophy to fortify his courage, but its first effect is to poison his mind by showing him that happiness is impossible.

Next morning, the regiment was very busy: every lancer's book had to be prepared for the inspection that was to be held before the departure for the Lunéville camp; their equipment had to be examined piece by piece.

"You'd think," said the old-timers, "that we were going to be reviewed by Napoleon!"

"It's more than it deserves, this war of chamber-pots and rotten apples we're expected to fight," said the young second-lieutenants. "It's sickening! But in case there's really a war we have to be on hand and know our *trade*."

After inspection in the barracks, the colonel allowed an hour for mess, then had the call to horse sounded and kept the regiment drilling for four hours. During all these divers occupations Lucien had a feeling of kindness toward the

soldiers; he was filled with tender pity for the weak, and after a few hours had once more become the passionate lover and nothing else. He had quite forgotten Madame d'Hocquincourt or, if she did find any place in his thoughts, it was only as a decoy that would save his honor, while boring him to death. The serious problem that he reverted to, whenever his thoughts were not forcibly focused upon his activities, was: "How will Madame de Chasteller receive me this evening?"

As soon as Lucien was alone, his uncertainty on this question turned to anxiety. As he left the ordinary, he looked at his watch before mounting his horse.

"It is five o'clock; I shall be back at seven-thirty, and at eight o'clock my fate will be decided. That expression, *my angel*, is probably in very bad taste at any time. A frivolous woman like Madame d'Hocquincourt might perhaps let it pass; some gay and gallant comment on her beauty would excuse it. But Madame de Chasteller! What possible excuse for the use of such a crude term had she ever given me, a woman so serious, so reasonable, so virtuous! Yes, *virtuous*. For, after all, I was not a witness of her intrigue with that lieutenant-colonel of Hussars, and people here are all such liars and slanderers! What trust can one put in anything they say? . . . Besides, for a long time now I haven't heard it mentioned . . . And finally, in plain words, I did not *see* it, and from now on I will believe only *what I see*. There were perhaps imbeciles there yesterday who, noticing the way I acted toward Madame d'Hocquincourt and her unbelievable assiduity in her attentions to me, will affirm that I am her lover . . . and some poor devil who happens to be in love with her will believe their gossip. . . . No, any sensible man believes only what he sees with his own eyes. What is there about Madame de Chasteller to mark her as a woman who cannot live without lovers? One might, on the contrary, ac-



cuse her of an excessive reserve, of prudishness. Poor thing! More than once yesterday she was even awkward out of sheer timidity. . . . She even blushes when she is alone with me, can't finish a sentence, forgetting apparently what she was going to say. . . . Compared to all the other women last evening, the poor woman is the Goddess of Chastity herself. Except for wit, there is no difference between the tone of her conversation and that of the Serpierre young ladies, whose virtue is proverbial. Half Madame de Chasteller's ideas are hidden from them, that is all, and those ideas can only be expressed in a somewhat philosophical language which, for that reason, seems less reserved. I can say many things to those young ladies the meaning of which only Madame de Chasteller grasps, and she is not shocked. In short, when it comes to a question of fact I should not readily believe the testimony of one of those people present yesterday evening. Against Madame de Chasteller, I have really only the testimony of the post-master, Bouchard. I made a mistake in not cultivating that man. What could have been simpler than to go to him for horses, to go to the stables myself to choose them? It was he who recommended my dealer in hay and my blacksmith, and, with them, I am in high favor. What a dolt I am!"

Lucien refused to admit to himself that the person of Bouchard was distasteful to him, because he was the only man who had openly spoken ill of Madame de Chasteller. The insinuations he had overheard one day at Madame de Serpierre's were all very vague. Madame de Chasteller's rather haughty air, which Nancy never thought of assigning to any cause other than the possession of an income of fifteen or twenty thousand francs which her husband had left her when he died, was really due to her irritation at all the rather too obvious compliments which she had to endure because of that fortune.

All the time these distressing thoughts were running through

his mind, Lucien kept his horse at a fast trot. He heard the clock of the little village half way to Darney strike half past six.

"I must go back," he thought, "and in one hour and a half my fate will be decided."

Suddenly, instead of turning his horse's head toward home, he spurred it on to a gallop and did not stop galloping until he reached Darney, the little town where he had formerly gone in the hope of finding letters from Madame de Chasteller. He took out his watch. It was eight o'clock.

"Impossible to see Madame de Chasteller tonight," he said to himself, breathing more freely. He was like a man condemned to death who has obtained a reprieve.

The next evening, after the busiest day of his life during which he had changed his mind three or four times, Lucien was finally forced to present himself at Madame de Chasteller's. She received him with what seemed extreme coldness. This was due to her anger with herself and her embarrassment at seeing Lucien.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

HAD HE PRESENTED himself the day before, Madame de Chasteller had made up her mind: she would have asked him, in the future, to come to see her only once a week. She was still dominated by her fright over those words Madame d'Hocquincourt had almost heard her say, the words she had almost spoken. Haunted by that dreadful evening at Madame d'Hocquincourt's, and by dint of repeating that it would be impossible much longer to hide from Lucien her feeling for him, it was not too difficult for

Madame de Chasteller to arrive at the decision not to see him so often. But hardly had this decision been reached when she felt the full force of its bitterness. Until Lucien's appearance in Nancy she had been a prey to boredom, but her boredom of that period would now have seemed a state of bliss compared to the misery of meeting, only at long intervals, this being who had become the sole object of her thoughts. The day before she had waited for him with impatience; she had thought she would find the courage to speak. But Lucien's failure to appear upset all her ideas. Her courage had been put to the severest test; a dozen times or more, during the two mortal hours of waiting, she had been on the point of abandoning her resolution. On the other hand the danger to her reputation was enormous.

"Never," she thought, "will my father, or any of my relatives, consent to my marrying M. Leuwen, a man of the opposite party, a *Blue*, and not of the nobility. It can't even be thought of; he himself does not dream of such a thing. Then, whatever am I doing? I can think of nothing but him. I have no mother to protect me, I am without a single friend to advise me, since my father so brutally cut me off from Madame de Constantin. Who in Nancy is there to whom I dare allow even a glimpse into my heart? It therefore behooves me to be adamant with myself. I must be all the more on my guard in this difficult position in which I find myself."

These arguments held their ground pretty well until ten o'clock struck, the hour after which, in Nancy, no one is supposed to call at a house which is not formally open that evening.

"That settles it!" said Madame de Chasteller, "he is at Madame d'Hocquincourt's. And," she sighed, "since he is not coming, and there is no chance of my seeing him tonight, what is the use of asking myself if I have the courage to speak to him about the frequency of his visits. It gives me a

little respite. But maybe he won't come tomorrow, either! Perhaps without any effort on my part and quite naturally, he will stop coming every day of his own accord!"

When Lucien finally appeared the next day, she too had several times, since the day before, changed her mind about him. There were moments when she wanted to confide her perplexities to him as to her best friend, then to say: "Decide for me."

"If, as happens in Spain, I saw him at midnight through a lattice, he in the street and I in my room above, it wouldn't matter if I said those dangerous things. But, as it is, if suddenly he takes my hand and says, as he did yesterday, so simply and with such sincerity in his voice: 'My angel, you love me,' will I be able to count on myself?"

Once the usual polite greetings were over and they were seated opposite each other, both very pale, they looked at each other, and found nothing to say.

"Were you at Madame d'Hocquincourt's yesterday, sir?"

"No, Madam," replied Lucien, ashamed of his embarrassment and once more making the heroic resolution of bringing things to a head and having his fate decided once and for all. "I was on the road to Darney when I heard the hour strike at which I usually have the honor of presenting myself at your door. Instead of returning, I galloped on like a madman in order to make seeing you impossible. My courage failed me; I did not have the strength to expose myself to your customary severity. I seemed to hear my sentence on your lips."

He fell silent. Then, in a barely articulate voice which revealed all his timidity, he added:

"The last time I saw you standing beside the little green table, I confess it . . . I had the temerity of making use, in addressing you, of an expression which ever since has

caused me untold remorse. I am afraid I shall be severely punished, for you are without indulgence toward me."

"Oh! since you are really repentant, sir, I forgive you the expression," said Madame de Chasteller, trying to assume a gay, careless air. "But I must speak to you about something which is of far greater consequence to me."

And her eyes, not able to keep up their pretense of gaiety, became profoundly serious.

Lucien trembled; for although he was annoyed with himself for his consternation, he was not vain enough to face with equanimity a life separated from Madame de Chasteller. What would become of him on the days he was not permitted to see her?

"Sir," continued Madame de Chasteller gravely, "I have no mother to provide me with wise counsels. A woman who lives alone, or practically alone, in a provincial city must be doubly careful of appearances. You come to see me often . . ."

"And so . . ." said Lucien, breathlessly.

Until that moment Madame de Chasteller's manner had been reasonable, decorous, cold, at least so it had seemed to Lucien. The tone of voice in which he pronounced the words: *and so . . .* might well have been beyond the powers of an accomplished Don Juan; with Lucien it was no trick of artifice but the impulse of his nature—it was natural. That simple exclamation changed everything. There was in it such wretchedness, such assurance of utter obedience, that Madame de Chasteller was, as it were, disarmed. She had gathered all her courage to resist someone strong and was confronted by extreme weakness. In an instant everything was changed. She no longer needed to fear her own lack of firmness, but rather to appear to be taking advantage of her victory. She was full of pity for the unhappiness she was causing Lucien.

In a dying voice, with lips pale and drawn in an effort to

appear inflexible, she explained to our hero her reasons for wishing to see him less frequently and for shorter periods at a time, for example every other day. People were beginning to show too great an interest in his visits. It was a question of not giving them an excuse for imagining things—entirely unjustified of course, and especially Mademoiselle Bérard who was a very dangerous witness.

Madame de Chasteller had scarcely the strength to complete these two or three sentences. The least word, the slightest objection from Lucien and her whole project would have crumbled. She felt the liveliest pity for his very evident unhappiness; she would never, she realized, have had the courage to persist. She was aware of nothing in the whole universe but him. Had Lucien been less in love and had he possessed more wit, he would have acted differently, but the fact was, and difficult to excuse in this day and age, that this twenty-three-year-old second-lieutenant was incapable of uttering one word of protest against this arrangement that would kill him. Imagine for yourself a coward who adores life and hears himself doomed to death.

Madame de Chasteller saw clearly what he was feeling; she herself was ready to burst into tears, she was overwhelmed with pity at the extreme distress she was causing.

“But,” she suddenly said to herself, “if he sees a tear I shall be more deeply involved than ever. I must, at all costs, put an end to this visit so fraught with danger.”

“After the wish I have expressed . . . sir . . . for some time already Mademoiselle Bérard, I fancy, has been counting the minutes you have spent with me . . . it would be prudent to cut your visit short.”

Lucien rose; he could not speak, he could hardly find voice enough to murmur: “Madam, I shall be in despair. . . .”

He opened the door that led from the library onto a little inner stairway which he often used to avoid passing through

the reception-room watchfully guarded by the terrible Mademoiselle Bérard.

Madame de Chasteller went to the door with him in order, by this courtesy, to mitigate a little the severity of the request she had just voiced. At the head of the little stairway Madame de Chasteller said to Lucien:

"Good-by, sir, until day after tomorrow."

Lucien turned. He was forced to rest one hand on the mahogany baluster to steady himself. Madame de Chasteller was touched and on a sudden impulse, as a sign of friendliness, after the English custom, held out her hand to him. Seeing Madame de Chasteller's hand drawing near his, Lucien seized it and slowly lifted it to his lips. As he did so his face came close to hers. He dropped her hand and took her in his arms, pressing his lips against her cheek. Madame de Chasteller did not find the strength to push him away, she remained motionless and unresisting in his arms. He pressed her to him in ecstasy, redoubling his kisses. Finally Madame de Chasteller gently disengaged herself, but her eyes, wet with tears, frankly betrayed the tenderest love. She succeeded, however, in saying:

"Good-by, sir . . ."

And as he gazed at her wildly, she quickly added:

"Good-by, *my friend*. Until tomorrow . . . but leave me now."

He left her and started down the stairs, but not without turning back to look at her again.

Lucien continued down the stairs in a state of unspeakable agitation. He was soon completely drunk with joy, which kept him from realizing that he was very young and very absurd.

Two weeks, three weeks passed. These were the happiest moments of Lucien's entire life, but he never again benefited by another such moment of weakness and surrender. And, as

you know, he was incapable of bringing such a moment about himself, for the very reason that it meant too much to him.

He saw Madame de Chasteller every day. His visits often lasted two or three hours, to the scandalized disapproval of Mademoiselle Bérard. Whenever Madame de Chasteller felt that she could no longer keep the conversation within proper limits, she would propose a game of chess. Sometimes Lucien would timidly take her hand. One day he even tried to embrace her, and she burst into tears. She appealed to his pity and put him on his honor. As her appeal was in good faith, it was received in the same spirit. Madame de Chasteller made him promise not to talk to her openly of his love, but often, to make amends, she would put her hand on his epaulet and play with the silver fringe. When she was convinced that she need have no fear of any encroachments on his part, she displayed a gentle natural gaiety with him, which, for the poor woman, was ideal happiness.

They talked about everything with such utter sincerity that an indifferent onlooker might well have found this tone quite cavalier and always too ingenuous. It took the boon of this boundless frankness to compensate for the sacrifice they made in not speaking of their love. Often some indirect little word coming up in the course of the conversation would make them both blush; then a little silence would ensue, and it was when it became too painfully prolonged that Madame de Chasteller would have recourse to chess.

Most of all, Madame de Chasteller liked to have Lucien confide all the thoughts he had had about her at different times—in the first month of their acquaintance, at the present moment. . . . These confidences tended to stifle the whisperings of that great enemy of our happiness which is called prudence. Prudence said:

“This is an infinitely cunning and clever young man who is playing a part for your benefit.”



Never had Lucien dared confide to her Bouchard's gossip about the lieutenant-colonel of Hussars. And dissimulation was so completely absent from their intercourse that twice this subject, mentioned by chance, came very near to starting another quarrel; for Madame de Chasteller saw in Lucien's eyes that he was concealing something.

"And that is a thing I will not forgive," she said to him with great firmness.

From Lucien, nevertheless, she hid the fact that almost every day her father made scenes on his account.

"What! my daughter, you spend two hours every day with a man of *that* party, and, what's more, a man whose birth makes it impossible for him to aspire to your hand."

Then followed touching words about an old father, almost an octogenarian, abandoned by his daughter, by his sole support.

The fact is that M. de Pontlevé lived in mortal fear of Lucien's father. Dr. Du Poirier had told him that M. Leuwen was a man of pleasure and wit, animated by a devilish propensity to what is the greatest of all enemies to the throne and the altar: irony. This banker might be disagreeable enough to divine the motive for M. de Pontlevé's passionate attachment to his daughter's ready money, and, what was worse, might say so.

### CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

WHILE MADAME DE CHASTELLER had forgotten the world and thought that the world had forgotten her, all Nancy was occupied with little else. Thanks to her father's complaints, she had become, for the good people of that city, the remedy that was *curing them*

of boredom. For anyone who understands the profound boredom of a small provincial town, no more need be said.

Madame de Chasteller was about as artful as Lucien. He was unable to win the proof that she loved him completely; and she, the society of Nancy being less and less amusing for a woman passionately preoccupied with one sole idea, rarely appeared at Mesdames de Commercy's, de Marcilly's, de Serpierre's, de Puylaurens', etc., etc. Her absence was interpreted as contempt, and gave wings to slander.

In the Serpierre household, they had flattered themselves, I don't know why, that Lucien would marry Mademoiselle Théodelinde. For in the provinces, a mother never meets a rich or noble young man without looking upon him as a prospective husband for one of her daughters.

While all society was ringing with M. de Pontlevé's complaints about M. Leuwen's attentions to his daughter, addressed to anybody who happened along, Madame de Serpierre was infinitely shocked, even beyond the bounds of her naturally exacting virtue. Lucien was received in the house with all the acrimony of *marriage hopes betrayed*, which can appear under such a variety of amiable forms in a family composed of six young ladies by no means remarkable for their beauty.

Madame de Commercy, on the other hand, true to the manners of the court of Louis XVI, treated Lucien with the same unvarying courtesy. But that was not the case in Madame de Marcilly's drawing room. Since Lucien's indiscreet reply to the grand vicar, M. Rey, on the subject of the shoemaker's funeral, that worthy and prudent ecclesiastic had taken it upon himself to ruin our second-lieutenant's position in Nancy. In less than two weeks M. Rey succeeded in skillfully insinuating everywhere, and establishing as a matter of fact in Madame de Marcilly's drawing room, that the Minister of War had a decided fear of public opinion in Nancy, a city so close to the frontier, a city of considerable importance,

center of the Lorraine nobility, and perhaps, above all, a fear of public opinion as it was manifested in the *salon* of Madame de Marcilly. This being the case, the Minister had sent to Nancy a young man who was obviously of a different stamp from his comrades, to observe the ways of this society and probe into its secrets. "Is this," he asked, "merely a sign of disapprobation or is there a question of taking action? The proof of all this is that Leuwen listens, without batting an eyelash, to things about the Duc d'Orleans (Louis-Philippe) which would compromise anyone but a spy." Before he joined the regiment he had been preceded by a reputation for republicanism which nothing justified, and which certainly never seemed to bother him in front of the portrait of Henri V.

This discovery flattered the vanity of this salon where the most exciting event hitherto had been the loss of nine or ten francs at whist by Mr. So-and-So on a particularly unlucky day. The Minister of War (perhaps, who knows, Louis-Philippe himself?) trembled before their opinion!

So Lucien was a spy of the *Juste-milieu*! M. Rey was too intelligent to credit any such nonsense, and as he might require a rather more plausible story for the salons of Madame de Puylaurens and Madame d'Hocquincourt, he had written to M——, Canon of ——, at Paris for further information on Lucien. This letter had been sent to a vicar of the parish in which Lucien's family lived, and M. Rey expected any day now to receive a detailed report.

Thanks to M. Rey, Lucien found his credit waning in most of the drawing rooms he frequented. It failed to worry him, in fact he hardly gave it a thought, for the d'Hocquincourt drawing room was an exception, and a brilliant exception. Ever since the departure of M. d'Antin, Madame d'Hocquincourt had managed things so well that her placid husband had begun to show a special liking for Lucien. In his youth M. d'Hocquincourt had had some slight knowledge of mathe-

matics and history. But far from diverting his thoughts from his melancholy ideas on the future, the study of history plunged him into even deeper gloom.

"Glance at the margins of Hume's *History of England*. You keep finding little marginal notes such as: *N. distinguishes himself, His deeds, His great qualities, His sentence, His execution*. And yet we imitate England; we began with the murder of a king, we have driven his brother out of the country, as they did the son of their king."

To avoid the fatal conclusion: *the guillotine awaits us*, he had decided to take up geometry again, useful, moreover, to a soldier. He bought books on the subject and two weeks later discovered that Lucien was just the man to guide his studies. He had indeed thought of M. Gauthier, but Gauthier was a republican; better a hundredfold to give up integral calculus altogether! But here right at hand was M. Leuwen, a charming man who, moreover, was in the habit of coming to the Hôtel d'Hocquincourt every evening. For this is how matters had been arranged:

At ten, or ten-thirty at the latest, the proprieties and the fear of Mademoiselle Bérard compelled Lucien to leave Madame de Chasteller's. Not being accustomed to retiring at such an early hour, he would then go to spend the rest of the evening at Madame d'Hocquincourt's. Whereupon two things had happened: M. d'Antin, a clever man who was not unduly attached to one woman more than another, seeing the part Madame d'Hocquincourt was preparing for him, received a letter from Paris that made a little trip imperative. The day of his departure, Madame d'Hocquincourt found him extremely amiable; but from that moment Lucien became infinitely less so. In vain the memory of Ernest Dévelroy's counsels urged him: "Since Madame de Chasteller is so virtuous, why not have a mistress in two volumes? Madame de Chasteller for the joys of the heart, and Madame d'Hocquin-

court for somewhat less metaphysical moments?" But it seemed to Lucien that if he deceived Madame de Chasteller he would deserve to be deceived by her. The real reason for our hero's heroic virtue was that Madame de Chasteller was, alone in the whole world, a woman in his eyes. Madame d'Hocquincourt was merely a nuisance to him, and he mortally dreaded finding himself tête-à-tête with that young woman, reputed to be the prettiest in the province.

The sudden coldness of Lucien's conversation following the departure of d'Antin turned Madame d'Hocquincourt's caprice into a veritable passion; she would say the tenderest things to him in front of everybody. Lucien appeared to receive these advances with an icy gravity that nothing could move.

This madness on the part of Madame d'Hocquincourt more than anything else turned the so-called sensible men of Nancy against Lucien too. Even M. de Vassigny, a man of merit, and M. de Puylaurens who possessed quite a different order of intelligence from that of M. de Pontlevé, de Sanréal or Roller, and totally inaccessible to the insinuations so slyly disseminated by M. Rey, both began to find this little upstart very much in the way, for thanks to him, Madame d'Hocquincourt no longer paid the slightest attention to anything they said to her. These gentlemen found the greatest pleasure in chatting every evening for a quarter of an hour or so with this pretty woman—so young, so fresh and so smartly dressed! Neither M. d'Antin nor any of his predecessors had ever caused that cold and distant air with which Madame d'Hocquincourt now listened to their gallantries.

"He has appropriated this pretty woman who was our only refuge," said the grave M. de Puylaurens. "Impossible to organize a tolerable outing in the country with anyone else. And now when a drive is proposed, instead of seizing any and every excuse to start the horses trotting, Madame d'Hocquincourt categorically refuses."

Madame d'Hocquincourt knew very well that before thirty Lucien was never free. Besides, whereas M. d'Antin could always be relied on to make things go, and merriment increased whenever and wherever he appeared, Lucien, through arrogance undoubtedly, spoke very little and made nothing go. He acted as a wet blanket.

Such began to be Lucien's position even in Madame d'Hocquincourt's drawing room, and all that remained to him was the friendship of M. de Lanfort, and the high esteem entertained for his wit by Madame de Puylaurens, a lady inexorable where wit was concerned.

When it was learned that Madame Malibran, on her way to Germany to pick up a few *thalers*, would be passing within two leagues of Nancy, M. de Sanréal had the brilliant idea of organizing a concert. It was a very grand affair and cost him a pretty penny. When the concert took place Madame de Chasteller failed to attend, but Madame d'Hocquincourt appeared surrounded by all her friends. Someone brought up the subject of a woman's favored suitor, her *ami-de-cœur* and this subject established the philosophic tone of the concert.

"To live without an *ami-de-cœur*," pronounced M. de Sanréal, half drunk with glory and punch, "would be the greatest stupidity if it weren't an impossibility."

"One must hasten to make one's choice," said M. de Vassigny.

Madame d'Hocquincourt leaned forward toward Lucien who was sitting directly in front of her.

"And if the person one has chosen," she murmured, "has a heart of stone, what is a lady to do?"

Lucien turned his head laughingly, and was very much surprised to find tears in the eyes which were gazing into his. This miracle arrested his customary wit. He thought of the miracle instead of thinking of a reply. As for her, she

said nothing but sat there with a conventional smile on her lips.

Leaving the concert, they returned on foot, and Madame d'Hocquincourt took Lucien's arm. She spoke hardly a word. When everyone was bidding her good-night in the courtyard of her hôtel, she squeezed Lucien's arm. Lucien left with the others.

She went up to her room and burst into tears. But she felt no animosity, and the next morning, paying a call on Madame de Serpierre, when the latter criticized Madame de Chasteller's conduct with the greatest acrimony, Madame d'Hocquincourt remained silent and uttered not a word against her rival. That evening, for something to say, Lucien complimented her on her costume:

"What a ravishing bouquet! What lovely colors! What freshness! It is the very image of the lady who wears it."

"You think so, really? Very well, it represents my heart, and I give it to you."

The look that accompanied the last word was without any of the gaiety which had, until then, reigned over the conversation. It lacked neither depth nor passion, and a sensible man would have had no doubt as to the significance of that gift. Lucien took the bouquet, said things more or less worthy of a Dorat, but his eyes remained gay and careless. He understood very well but did not want to understand.

He was desperately tempted but resisted the temptation. The following evening he felt like relating his adventure to Madame de Chasteller, as much as to say: "Repay me for what you have cost me." But he did not dare.

It was one of his mistakes: in love one must always dare, or expose oneself to strange reverses. Madame de Chasteller had already heard with distress of M. d'Antin's departure. The day after the concert, Madame de Chasteller learned from

the all-too-frank pleasantries of her cousin Blancet that on the preceding evening Madame d'Hocquincourt had made a *spectacle of herself*. Her predilection for Lucien was turning into a *perfect frenzy*, said her cousin. That evening Lucien found Madame de Chasteller very gloomy. She treated him badly. This somber humor only increased with the days that followed, and between them would fall silences of fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. But these were no longer those delicious silences of the past which had forced Madame de Chasteller to take refuge in chess.

Could these be the same two people for whom a week ago all the minutes of two long hours were not enough to tell each other all they had to say?

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

TWO DAYS LATER Madame de Chasteller was seized with a high fever. Believing her reputation ruined, she suffered unspeakable remorse. But all that was as nothing: she doubted Lucien's love.

Her womanly dignity was appalled by the strangeness of the feelings that took possession of her, and most of all by the vehemence of her emotions. This sentiment had grown all the stronger since she no longer feared for her virtue: in case of extreme danger a trip to Paris, where Lucien could not follow her, would keep her safe from all peril, although tearing her violently away from the only place on earth where she believed happiness was possible for her.

For several days the prospect of this remedy had reassured her, made her life more or less peaceful. A letter, dispatched by messenger and without the knowledge of M. de Pontlevé, to



her closest friend, Madame de Constantin, asking her advice, had brought a favorable reply, approving the trip to Paris in case of emergency. Her conscience thus pacified, Madame de Chasteller had been happy.

Then, all at once, after M. de Blancet's account of what had taken place at Madame de Malibran's concert and all the coarse pleasantries of which he was prodigal (expressed, to be sure, in perfectly proper terms), she again became a prey to the most atrocious suffering, of which she was ashamed.

"Blancet has no tact," she said to herself. "He is one of those who suffer from the superiority of M. Leuwen. Perhaps he is exaggerating. Would M. Leuwen who is so sincere with me—one day even confessing that he had ceased to love me for a while—would he deceive me today? . . ."

"Nothing could be simpler to explain," replied the party on the side of prudence. "It is agreeable, and in perfect taste, for a young man to have two mistresses at the same time, especially if one of them is dismal, severe, always taking refuge behind the qualms of her tiresome virtue, while the other is gay, amiable, pretty, and does not have the reputation of driving her lovers to despair by her severity. M. Leuwen would have the right to say to me: 'Either stop being so loftily virtuous, and making scenes merely because I try to take your hand' . . . (it's true, I did treat him badly for such a trivial offense)" she paused a moment and sighed . . . "‘stop being so excessively virtuous or else allow me to take advantage of a momentary admiration Madame d'Hocquincourt entertains for my humble merits.’"

"Still, no matter how indelicate such reasoning may be," love's advocate retorted angrily, "he should have made some such declaration to me. That is what any honest man would have done. But perhaps M. de Blancet exaggerates . . . I must find out."

She ordered her carriage and was driven in haste to Madame de Serpierre's and then to Madame de Marcilly's. Everything was confirmed. Madame de Serpierre went even further than M. de Blancet.

By the time she got home again Madame de Chasteller was scarcely thinking of Lucien at all. Despair fired her imagination and it was entirely occupied in picturing the charms and seductive amiability of Madame d'Hocquincourt. She compared these with her own habitual reserve, so sad and so severe. This comparison tormented her all night. She experienced all those sensations which are the tortures of the blackest jealousy.

Everything about this passion, of which she found herself a victim, amazed and horrified her feminine modesty. For General de Chasteller, she had felt nothing but friendship and gratitude for his irreproachable conduct. She was even without the knowledge acquired from books. All novels had been represented to her at the Sacred Heart as obscene. Nor, since her marriage, had she read any novels, for a lady admitted to the conversation of royal princesses should know nothing of such literature. Besides, novels seemed crude to her.

"But am I even able to say that I am true to what a woman owes herself?" she questioned at dawn after that cruel night. "If M. Leuwen were sitting there opposite me now, looking at me as he does when he is afraid to tell me all he is thinking, made miserable by the mad restraints prescribed by virtue, that is, by my own selfish interests, would I be able to bear his silent reproaches? No, I would succumb . . . I am without virtue, and I cause the unhappiness of the one I love . . ."

Such a complexity of anxieties was too much for Madame de Chasteller's health, and a high fever broke out anew.

Excited by the fever, which from the first day made her

delirious, she kept seeing Madame d'Hocquincourt as she was at the Malibran concert—gay, amiable, happy, adorned with charming flowers (she had been told about the famous bouquet), embellished by a thousand seductive charms, and with Lucien at her feet. Then always the same argument would return:

“Wretched woman that I am, what have I ever accorded to M. Leuwen that he should feel himself bound to me? What right have I to keep him from responding to the advances of a charming woman, prettier than I, and above all, certainly more agreeable, and agreeable in just the way to please a young man accustomed to Parisian society: a gaiety that is ever fresh and never malicious?”

As she followed this sad reasoning she could not help asking for a little oval mirror. She looked at herself. With each new experience of this kind, she found herself less attractive. Finally she came to the conclusion that she was really ugly, and she loved Lucien all the more for his good taste in preferring Madame d'Hocquincourt.

The second day the fever grew worse; and even gloomier the phantoms that tortured her heart. The mere sight of Mademoiselle Bérard threw her into convulsions. She refused to see M. de Blancet. She loathed him. She kept remembering him as he had told her about the fatal concert. M. de Pontlevé paid her two formal calls every day. Dr. Du Poirier attended her with the same diligence and concentration he displayed in everything he undertook. He visited the Hôtel de Pontlevé two or three times a day. In the doctor's treatment the greatest blow to Madame de Chasteller was his strict order that she should not leave her bed; henceforth she could no longer hope to see Lucien. She was afraid even to pronounce his name, to ask her maid if he came to inquire for her. Due to the incessant and impatient attention with which she kept

trying to distinguish the sound of his tilbury wheels she knew so well, her fever rose.

Lucien took the liberty of calling every morning. The third day he left the Hôtel de Pontlevé very much disturbed by Dr. Du Poirier's ambiguous replies. Climbing into his tilbury he drove off at a reckless pace, and on the square known as the promenade, which was planted with linden trees clipped to resemble parasols, he all but grazed M. de Sanréal. The latter had just finished breakfast, and while waiting for dinner was strolling idly through the streets of Nancy arm in arm with Comte Ludwig Roller.

This pair presented a ludicrous contrast. Although very young, Sanréal was extremely stout and not five feet tall, with a ruddy complexion and immense side whiskers that were startlingly blond. Ludwig Roller, tall, pale-faced and dismal, looked like a mendicant monk out of favor with his Superior. Topping a body at least six feet tall, his little head was ringed with a fringe of black hair, reminiscent of a monk's tonsure; fleshless and expressionless features set off his dull and insignificant eyes. A black suit, threadbare and too tight for him, completed the contrast between this ex-lieutenant of cuirassiers whose pay was his fortune, and the fortunate Sanréal whose coat had not buttoned across his middle for many long years, but who enjoyed an income of, at least, forty thousand francs. With the help of this fortune, he was credited with great valor, for he wore iron spurs three inches long, could not say two words without cursing, and never spoke for any length of time without embarking on some hair-raising account of duels. So it naturally followed, although he had never fought a duel himself, that he was brave, apparently because of the fear he inspired. Besides he had the gift of instigating the Rollers against anyone who displeased him.

Ever since the July Days, followed by their resignation, the

three Roller brothers were far more bored than before. They owned one horse between them, and their apathy never gave way to the least sign of enjoyment except when there was a duel to fight, which they accomplished admirably and because of this talent were looked upon with considerable respect.

As it was only noon when Lucien's tilbury made the pavement tremble under the feet of the enormous Sanréal, the latter had not yet visited any café and was not yet entirely tipsy. Encouraged by Ludwig Roller, Sanréal was amusing himself chucking the chins of all the peasant girls who happened to pass. With his riding whip he kept slashing at the awnings of the cafés and at the chairs under them, as well as at the lower branches of the linden trees on the square.

Lucien's tilbury dashing by interrupted these pleasant pursuits.

"Do you think he intended that as a provocation?" Sanréal cried, turning to Roller with all the blustering fury of the bully.

"Listen," said Comte Ludwig, turning pale, "that young coxcomb is always polite, and I don't think he intended any offense with his tilbury. But I detest him even more because he's so damned polite. He has just left the Hôtel de Pontlevé. He means to carry off the prettiest woman in Nancy and our richest heiress, at least in the class from which you and I can choose a wife. . . . And that," added Roller firmly, "is something I'll not stand for."

"You are right," replied Sanréal, enchanted.

"In such matters, my friend," replied Roller acidly, "you ought to know that I never speak lightly."

"Are you putting on airs with *me*?" replied Sanréal in his best swashbuckling manner. "We understand each other. The essential thing is that he should not escape us. He's a crafty beggar and he's come off on top in the two duels he fought in his regiment."

"Sword duels! That's a joke! The wound he gave Captain Bobé was cured by the application of two leeches. But with me, egad! it will be a regular duel with pistols at ten paces, and if he doesn't kill me, I promise you he'll need more than two leeches."

"Let's go to my house. We shouldn't talk about these things with the spies of the *Juste-milieu* all around the promenade. I have just received a little cask of *kirschwasser* from Freiburg-im-Breisgau. Send word to your brothers and Lanfort."

"Why so many people? A half sheet of paper is all I need." And Comte Ludwig strode briskly toward a café.

"If you're going to play the fire-eater with me, I'm leaving you flat. . . . The important thing is to prevent this cursed Parisian from putting us in the wrong by one of his tricks and making a laughingstock of us. What can prevent his spreading the report in his regiment that we, the young nobility of Lorraine, have formed a protective society to prevent anyone from running off with young widows with sizable dowries?"

The three Rollers, along with Murcé and Goëlle, whom the café waiter had found playing pool not ten steps away, were soon assembled in M. de Sanréal's fine mansion, enchanted to find something to talk about, and all of them talking at once. The council was held around a massive mahogany table. Aping the English fashion, it was without a tablecloth, but over its mirroring mahogany surface circulated magnificent crystal decanters from the neighboring factories of Baccarat. A *kirschwasser* limpid as spring water, an eau-de-vie of a rich madeira yellow, gleamed in the bottles. Soon it became evident that all three Roller brothers wanted to fight Lucien. M. de Goëlle, a fop thirty-six years old, spare and wrinkled, who, during his lifetime, had aspired to everything, even to the hand of Madame de Chasteller, pleaded his cause

with all due weight and circumspection, and insisted upon being the first to fight Lucien because he felt himself more injured than anyone else.

"Before he ever came here, wasn't I lending the lady Baudry's English novels?"

"Baudry be damned!" cried Lanfort who had just come in. "This fine fellow has offended all of us, and no one more than my poor friend d'Antin who has had to go away to get over it."

"To get used to his horns, you mean," interrupted Sanréal, laughing boisterously.

"D'Antin is my best friend," replied Lanfort, shocked at Sanréal's vulgarity. "If he were here he would fight every one of you rather than give up his right to have first chance at this amiable lady-killer. And for all these reasons, I too wish to fight."

For the last twenty minutes Sanréal's valor had been in a sorry plight. He saw plainly that everyone wanted to fight and he was the only one who had not put in his claim. After that of the gentle, amiable, preëminently elegant M. de Lanfort, there was no escape.

"In any case, gentlemen," he said finally, in a shrill and unnatural voice, "I am certainly second on the list; after all Roller and I were the ones who, under the lindens of the promenade, first conceived the plan."

"He is right," said M. de Goëlle. "Let's draw lots to see which of us is to rid the town of this public pest." (And he preened himself, very proud of this neat phrase.)

"By all means," said M. de Lanfort. "But, gentlemen, we cannot have more than one duel. If M. Leuwen is forced to meet four or five of us, I warn you that the *Aurore* will seize upon the story and you will all find yourselves written up in the Paris newspapers."

"And if he should kill one of our friends?" thundered Sanréal. "Are we to leave his death unavenged?"

The discussion lasted until dinner, which was both abundant and excellent. They all pledged their word of honor that they would not speak of the affair to a soul, and before eight hours had elapsed Dr. Du Poirier knew all about it.

Now there was a special order from Prague that quarrels were to be avoided between the nobility and the regiments of the camp of Lunéville and of the neighboring cities. That evening, with all the graciousness of an angry bulldog, Du Poirier approached Sanréal. His little eyes glittered like those of an infuriated cat.

"You will invite me to breakfast tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. You will also invite MM. Roller, de Lanfort, de Goëlle, and anyone else who is included in the plan. You will all listen to what I have to say."

Sanréal was dying to take offense, but he was afraid of one of Du Poirier's stinging remarks that would be repeated throughout the length and breadth of Nancy. He agreed with a nod of his head which was almost as gracious as Du Poirier's own manner.

The next day when his guests discovered with whom they had to deal, they made wry faces. The doctor arrived in a great hurry.

"Gentlemen," he said at once, without greeting anyone, "the Church and the Nobility have a great many enemies. Among others the newspapers which keep France informed, and make everything we do appear odious. If this were simply a question of chivalric valor, I should be satisfied merely to admire, and should take good care not to open my mouth, a poor plebeian like me, son of a small merchant who has the honor of addressing representatives of all that is noblest in Lorraine. But, gentlemen, I can see that you are all a trifle



angry. Anger alone, no doubt, has kept you from stopping to reflect. That is my domain. You do not want a little second-lieutenant to carry off Madame de Chasteller? Very well! But what power on earth can prevent Madame de Chasteller from leaving Nancy and going to Paris to live? There, surrounded by friends who will give her the necessary courage, she will write the most touching imaginable letters to M. de Pontlevé: 'I can only be happy with M. Leuwen,' she will say, and she will say it well because that is what she feels. Will M. de Pontlevé refuse? It is doubtful, since his daughter is really serious, and he will not wish to break with someone who has 400,000 francs in the public funds. And Madame de Chasteller, her courage fortified by the advice of her Paris friends, among whom may be counted ladies of the highest distinction, can very well overlook the consent of a father in the provinces.

"Are you certain of killing Leuwen on the spot? In that case I have nothing more to say; Madame de Chasteller will not marry him. But, believe me, she will not, for that reason, marry one of you. According to my observation, she is a woman of a serious, tender, and obstinate disposition. One hour after the death of M. Leuwen, she has her horses harnessed to her carriage, takes fresh ones at the next post, and God only knows where she will stop! Brussels, Vienna, perhaps, since her father has invincible objections to Paris. No matter what happens, you may be sure of one thing: if Leuwen dies you will lose her forever. If he is wounded, the whole department will know the cause of the duel, and with her modesty she will think herself dishonored and, the day Leuwen is out of danger, will fly to Paris where Leuwen will join her a month later. In one word, it is only Madame de Chasteller's timidity keeps her here in Nancy; give her the slightest excuse and she will leave. In killing Leuwen you satisfy, I admit, an access of righteous anger, and between the seven of you,

no doubt, you will succeed in killing him, but the lovely eyes and the beautiful dowry of Madame de Chasteller will be lost to you forever."

At this point everyone began to mutter protests and these only redoubled Du Poirier's impudence.

"If two or three of you," he went on, raising his voice, "fight Leuwen in succession, you will be looked upon as assassins, and the whole regiment will be up in arms against you."

"That is just what we want," cried Ludwig Roller with all the fury of his long pent-up rage.

"He's right!" cried his brothers. "We'll attend to those *Blues*."

"And that is exactly what I forbid you to do, gentlemen—in the name of the King's commissioner for Alsace, Franche-Comté, and Lorraine."

All sprang to their feet at once. They rebelled against the insolence of this little bourgeois who dared to take such a tone with the flower of Lorraine's aristocracy. Such moments as these, indeed, were the delight of Du Poirier's vanity. His fiery temper rejoiced in battles of this kind. Not unmindful of their marks of contempt, on occasion he felt a need of humbling the overweening pride of these aristocrats.

After a torrent of wild words dictated by childish vanity, called pride of birth, the tide of battle turned in the favor of Du Poirier, the strategist.

"Do you wish to disobey, not me who am but an earthworm, but our legitimate King, Charles X?" he asked, after allowing each of them the pleasure of talking of his ancestors, his valor, and the place he had occupied in the Army before the fatal days of 1830. . . . "The King does not wish to quarrel with his regiments. Nothing more impolitic than a quarrel between his corps of nobles and a regiment."

Du Poirier repeated this truism so often and in such a

variety of terms that it ended at last by penetrating their heads, unaccustomed to the comprehension of anything new. Thanks to a flow of eloquence which Du Poirier calculated lasted from three quarters to one full hour, pride capitulated at last.

Hoping to lose less time, Du Poirier, whose ferocious vanity had begun to be tempered by boredom, undertook to say something flattering to each of them. He made the conquest of Sanréal, who had furnished Roller with arguments, by asking him for some of his spiced wine. Sanréal had invented a new way of concocting this adorable beverage, and hastened to the pantry to mix it himself.

When everyone had accepted the dictatorship of Du Poirier, he said:

"You really want to get rid of Leuwen, gentlemen, and at the same time not lose Madame de Chasteller?"

"Naturally!" they replied impatiently.

"Very well, then, I know one sure means. . . . You can doubtlessly guess what it is yourselves, if you stop to think."

And his malicious little eyes gleamed with satisfaction at their expectant air.

"Tomorrow, at the same hour, I shall tell you what that means is; nothing could be simpler. But it has one drawback, it demands the utmost secrecy for an entire month. You must allow me to divulge it only to two delegates, whom you, gentlemen, shall designate."

With these words he left abruptly, and hardly had he disappeared before Ludwig Roller began heaping him with terrible insults. Everyone followed his example with the exception of M. de Lanfort who said:

"His appearance is deplorable, he is ugly, dirty, his hat must be at least eighteen months old, he is familiar to the point of insolence. Most of his faults are due to his origin: his father, he admits, was a hemp merchant. But the greatest

kings have made use of baseborn counselors. Du Poirier is far cleverer than I am, for the devil take me if I can guess his infallible means. And you, Ludwig, who have so much to say, can you?"

Everyone laughed except Ludwig, and Sanréal, enchanted by the turn things were taking, invited them to breakfast again the next day. But nevertheless before separating, stung though they were by Du Poirier's attitude, they named two delegates and naturally their choice fell on the two persons who would have objected the loudest had they not been chosen—M. de Sanréal and M. Ludwig Roller.

On leaving these fiery gentlemen, Du Poirier hastened to find, at the end of a little street, an obscure priest whom the prefect believed to be a spy in society and who as such drew a goodly share of the *secret funds*.

"You will go to M. Fléron, my dear Olive, and inform him that we have received a despatch from Prague, over which we have been deliberating for five hours at a meeting at M. de Sanréal's. But this despatch is of such importance that tomorrow at ten-thirty, we are to meet again in the same place."

Abbé Olive had obtained permission from Monsignor the Bishop to wear an extremely shabby blue coat and iron-gray stockings. It was in this costume that he went to betray Du Poirier and reveal his message to the Grand Vicar, M. Rey. After that he slipped off to the prefect who at the great news was unable to sleep all night.

Early the next morning he sent word to Olive that he would pay fifty *écus* for an exact copy of the despatch from Prague; and he had the audacity to write directly to the Minister of the Interior at the risk of displeasing his superior, M. Dumoral, a liberal renegade and a man who was in a perpetual state of anxiety. M. Fléron wrote to the latter as well, but the letter

was mailed an hour too late, thus giving the important information sent to the Minister of the Interior by the humble prefect a whole hour's start.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

**B**LOCKHEADS!" cried Du Poirier to himself when he learned the choice of the two delegates. "They don't even know how to select delegates. The devil if I tell them my plan."

At the meeting next day, Du Poirier, more serious and arrogant than ever, took Roller and Sanréal by the arm, led them into the latter's study, and locked the door.

Du Poirier was particularly punctilious in the observation of formalities, knowing that that was about all Sanréal would understand of the entire affair.

When they were all seated in armchairs, Du Poirier after a little silence began:

"Gentlemen, we are gathered here today in the service of His Majesty, Charles X, our legitimate King. Will you swear absolute secrecy even on the little I am permitted to reveal to you today?"

"My word of honor!" said Sanréal, overcome by respect and curiosity.

"Oh, f——!" exclaimed Roller impatiently.

"Gentlemen, your servants are being bribed by the republicans—that menial tribe can slip in everywhere; and unless we maintain absolute secrecy, even in regard to our closest friends, the good cause will not succeed and we shall find ourselves vilified in the *Aurore*."

*For the sake of the reader I shall drastically curtail the*

discourse Dr. Du Poirier thought fit to address to these two gentlemen, the rich one and the brave one.

"The secret I had hoped to submit to you," he said finally, "is no longer mine. For the moment I am charged only to ask you to restrain your valor . . ." and here the doctor turned pointedly to Sanréal. "This will, I know, cost you a great deal."

"Certainly," said Sanréal.

"But, gentlemen, when one is a member of a great party, one must be ready to make sacrifices to the general will, even if it is wrong. Otherwise one is nothing, succeeds in accomplishing nothing. One deserves to be called a lost sheep. You must promise me that none of you will challenge M. Leuwen for the next two weeks."

"Must . . . Must . . ." Ludwig Roller repeated the word bitterly.

"By that time, M. Leuwen will either have left Nancy or he will no longer be paying calls on Madame de Chasteller—results which, as I have shown you, could not be obtained by a duel."

This had to be repeated in a variety of forms for an hour. The two deputies contended that it was not only their right but their duty to insist upon knowing the secret.

"A pretty figure we'll cut with the gentlemen waiting in the drawing room when they learn that we have been shut up here for a whole hour without learning a thing!"

"Then let them suppose that you do know," said the doctor coolly.

It took another hour, at least, to get this *mezzo termine* accepted by the vanity of the two gentlemen.

Dr. Du Poirier got through this trial of patience admirably and with great satisfaction to his pride. He liked, above all things, to talk, and to have to convince hostile listeners. A man of a repulsive exterior, he was endowed with a firm,

lively and enterprising mind. Since he had got mixed up in political intrigue, the art of healing, in which he had acquired one of the foremost places, began to bore him. The service of Charles X, which he called *politics*, fed his desire for action, for work, for recognition. Flatterers assured him: "If Prussian or Russian battalions bring Charles X back, you are bound to be a deputy, a minister, etc. You will be our new Villèle."

"All in good time," Du Poirier would reply.

Meanwhile he was enjoying all the gratification of satisfied ambition. And it had come about in this way: M. de Puylaurens and M. de Pontlevé had received authority, from the proper source, to direct the Royalists' ventures in the province of which Nancy was the chief city. By rights, Du Poirier should have been simply the humble secretary of this commission, or rather of this occult power, which had only one rational thing about it; it was not divided against itself. Authority had been granted to M. de Puylaurens and in his absence, to M. de Pontlevé; but it was Du Poirier as a matter of fact who did everything. He gave the meagerest reports of his activities to the two titular heads, who did not object too much. For Du Poirier craftily saw to it that they should always glimpse the guillotine, or, at least, the Chateau de Ham, at the end of their plots, and these gentlemen, who were quite devoid of zeal, fanaticism, or devotion, were entirely happy to let this coarse and fearless bourgeois compromise himself—reserving for themselves the right to quarrel with him and put him in his place later on should they have any sort of success or in the event of a third Restoration.

Du Poirier had not the least feeling of animosity toward Lucien. With his passion for accomplishing whatever he set out to do, and now charged with the mission of getting rid of Lucien, he was determined to succeed.

Neither at the first meeting at Sanréal's when he asked for two delegates, nor at the second when he overcame their un-

satisfied curiosity, had he as yet any very clear plan. It came to him by successive stages as he gradually realized that to allow the duel, which he had forbidden in the name of the King, to take place would be a marked defeat, a *fiasco*, not only for his reputation but for his influence in Lorraine among the younger members of the party.

He began by confiding to Mesdames de Serpierre, de Puy-laurens, and de Marcilly, under the seal of secrecy, that Madame de Chasteller was much more seriously ill than had been supposed, and that her illness would certainly be a prolonged one. He persuaded Madame de Chasteller to submit to a blistering of her legs, thus preventing her from walking for a month. A few days later he arrived looking very grave, becoming even gloomier as he took her pulse, and he advised her to have the religious rites performed. All Nancy echoed with this news; and one can well imagine the effect on Lucien. Was Madame de Chasteller at death's door?

"And is death nothing more than this?" Madame de Chasteller said to herself, never dreaming that she was suffering from nothing more serious than a benign fever. "Death would be absolutely nothing if only M. Leuwen were with me. He would give me courage if mine should fail me. Indeed, life without him would have had little charm for me. I am forced to vegetate in this provincial town where, before he came, my life was so dismal. . . . But he is not an aristocrat and he is a soldier of the *Juste-milieu* or, much worse, of the Republic. . . ."

Madame de Chasteller now actually began to long for death.

She was on the point of hating Madame d'Hocquincourt, and when she discovered this budding hatred in her heart, she despised herself. Since for two endless weeks she had not seen Lucien, her love for him gave her nothing but wretchedness.

In his despair, Lucien had gone to Darney to post three



letters, extremely discreet ones luckily, for they were intercepted by Mademoiselle Bérard, who was now in perfect accord with Dr. Du Poirier.

At this time, Lucien practically never left the doctor. It was a foolish move. He was far from being sufficiently wise in the ways of hypocrisy to permit himself the intimacy of such an unprincipled intriguer. Without knowing it, he had mortally offended Du Poirier. Piqued by Lucien's naïve contempt for rogues, renegades and hypocrites, the doctor began to hate him. Whenever they discussed the possibility of the return of the Bourbons he was amazed at the warmth and sound judgment of Lucien's arguments.

"But if that is the case," he cried one day at the end of his patience, "then I am nothing but an imbecile, I suppose?"

To himself he continued:

"We'll see, young fool, what is going to happen to your most precious interest! Go on reasoning about the future, repeat all the arguments you find ready made in your Carrel, *I* am the master of your present, as you will soon find out. Yes, old and wrinkled and shabby and uncouth as I am in your eyes, *I* am going to inflict the cruelest suffering on you, who are so handsome, young, rich and endowed by nature with noble manners, and in every way so different from me, Doctor Du Poirier. I spent the first thirty years of my life freezing on a fifth floor with a skeleton. You only took the trouble of getting born, and you secretly believe that when your *reasonable government* has been established you can punish strong men like me simply with contempt! That will be stupid of your party. Meanwhile it is stupid of you not to guess that I am going to hurt you—and hurt you badly. Suffer, little boy, suffer!"

And so the doctor began talking to Lucien about Madame de Chasteller's illness in the most alarming terms. If perchance

he caught but the ghost of a smile on Lucien's lips he hastened to say:

"You see that church? The Pontlevé family vault is in there," adding with a sigh, "I'm very much afraid that it will soon have to be opened once more."

He had been waiting for several days for Lucien, who like all lovers was mad, to attempt to see Madame de Chasteller secretly.

Ever since his conference with the young men of the Party at Sanréal's, Du Poirier, who despised Mademoiselle Bérard's stupid aimless malice, had become reconciled to her. It was to her, rather than to M. de Pontlevé or M. de Blancet, or any other relative, that he confided Madame de Chasteller's supposed critical condition.

One great obstacle lay in the way of the project which was gradually taking shape in his mind: that was the constant presence of Madame de Chasteller's maid, Mademoiselle Beaulieu, who adored her mistress.

The doctor won her over, however, by showing how much he relied on her. He got Mademoiselle Bérard to consent to his often consulting with Mademoiselle Beaulieu instead of with her, as to what should be done for his patient until his next visit.

This good woman, like the none too good Mademoiselle Bérard, believed that Madame de Chasteller was dangerously ill.

The doctor confided to the maid that he thought some sentimental sorrow was aggravating her mistress's malady. He insinuated that it would seem to him only *natural* if M. Leuwen tried to see Madame de Chasteller.

"Alas, Doctor, for the last two weeks M. Leuwen has been pestering me to let him see Madame de Chasteller for five minutes. But what would people say? I refused absolutely."

The doctor replied with a quantity of phrases far beyond the intelligence of the maid to be able to repeat, but which in fact indirectly but clearly urged the good girl to permit the desired interview.

At last one evening it so happened that M. de Pontlevé, on the doctor's order, went to play a game of whist at Madame de Marcilly's, a game that was interrupted two or three times by his fits of weeping. And precisely the same day M. de Blancet, since it happened to be the season when woodcocks migrate, could not resist joining a hunting party. That very evening Lucien saw in Mademoiselle Beaulieu's window the signal which revived all his hopes and restored his interest in life. Lucien flew home, returned in civilian clothes, and at last, his presence being announced with infinite precaution by the faithful maid, who never went far from her mistress's sick-bed, he was able to spend ten minutes with Madame de Chasteller.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

THE NEXT DAY when he arrived the doctor found Madame de Chasteller without fever and feeling so well that he was alarmed lest all the pains he had taken in the last three weeks should prove fruitless. In the presence of Mademoiselle Beaulieu he affected a very worried air and left like a man in a great hurry, returning some time later at an unprecedented hour.

"Beaulieu," he said, "your mistress is falling into a decline."

"Oh, my God, Doctor!"

Here the doctor expatiated upon the nature of a decline.

"What your mistress needs is mother's milk. If anything

can save her life, it is the milk of a fresh young peasant girl. I have scoured all Nancy, I find only workmen's wives whose milk would do Madame de Chasteller more harm than good. What we need is a young peasant girl. . . ."

While he was talking, the doctor noticed that Beaulieu kept looking at the clock.

"My village, Chefmont, is only five leagues from here. I'd get there at night, but that doesn't matter. . . ."

"Splendid, splendid! my good, my excellent Beaulieu! But, if you find a young nurse, be sure not to let her make the trip without a break. Do not return until day after tomorrow morning. The overheated milk would be a poison to your poor mistress."

"Do you think, Doctor, that it would hurt Madame to see M. Leuwen again? She has practically ordered me to let him in if he comes this evening. She is so fond of him! . . ."

The doctor could hardly believe his luck.

"Nothing could be more *natural*, Beaulieu." (He always insisted on the word, *natural*.) "But who will take your place?"

"Anne-Marie, a good girl and a pious girl."

"Very well, leave your instructions with Anne-Marie. Where does M. Leuwen wait until you announce him?"

"In the balcony of Madame's ante-chamber where Joseph used to sleep."

"In your poor mistress's present condition, she should not have too much excitement at one time. Therefore I advise you to allow no one else to see her, absolutely no one—not even M. de Blancet."

This, and many other details, were agreed upon between the doctor and Mademoiselle Beaulieu. This admirable girl left Nancy at five o'clock, after installing Anne-Marie in her place.

Now for a long time Anne-Marie, whom Madame de Chas-

teller had more than once been on the point of discharging and had only retained out of pure kindness, had been entirely devoted to Mademoiselle Bérard, even spying on Beaulieu for her.

This is what occurred: at eight-thirty, while Mademoiselle Bérard was engaged in talking to the porter, Anne-Marie had signaled Lucien to cross the courtyard, and two minutes later he was installed in the balcony of painted wood that occupied a half of Madame de Chasteller's ante-chamber. From there Lucien could see very well what was going on in the room and hear almost everything that was said in the entire apartment.

All at once he heard what sounded like the wail of a newborn infant. Then he saw the doctor come into the ante-chamber out of breath and carrying a baby wrapped in a cloth that seemed to be stained with blood.

"Your poor mistress," the doctor said quickly to Anne-Marie, "is out of danger at last! The delivery was without complications. Is M. de Pontlevé out of the house?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"And that confounded Beaulieu is not here either?"

"She is on her way to her own village."

"I fixed up a pretext for her to go there for a wet nurse. The one I engaged in the suburbs refuses to take a clandestine baby."

"And M. de Blancet?"

"What is most singular is that your mistress refuses to see him."

"And no wonder!" said Anne-Marie, "after a present like that!"

"And, after all, the baby may not be his."

"Faith, these great ladies don't go to church very often, but they make up for it by having as many lovers as they please."

"I think I heard Madame de Chasteller groaning," said the doctor, "I must go back to her. I'll send Mademoiselle Bérard to you."

Mademoiselle Bérard arrived. She detested Lucien, and in a conversation of a quarter of an hour said exactly the same things the doctor had said but managed to make them much more malicious. Mademoiselle Bérard was of the opinion that this little bratling, as she called it, belonged to M. de Blancet or to the Lieutenant-Colonel of Hussars.

"Or to M. de Goëlle," suggested Anne-Marie as naturally as possible.

"No, not M. de Goëlle," retorted Mademoiselle Bérard, "Madame can no longer endure him. He was responsible for the abortion which almost caused an open break with that poor Monsieur de Chasteller."

It can well be imagined in what a state Lucien found himself by this time. He was on the point of leaving his hiding place and fleeing despite the presence of Mademoiselle Bérard.

"No," he said to himself, "even if she has made a fool of me and treated me like the poor innocent I am, it would still be contemptible to compromise her."

At that moment, the doctor, fearing some really too improbable bit of malevolence from Mademoiselle Bérard, came to the door of the ante-chamber.

"Mademoiselle Bérard! Mademoiselle Bérard!" he cried with an air of alarm. "A hemorrhage. . . . Quick, quick! that bucket of ice I brought under my cloak."

As soon as Anne-Marie was alone, Lucien came out of his hiding place and handed her his purse. As he did so he could not help seeing the infant she was so ostentatiously holding and who, instead of being a few minutes old, was at least a month or two. But that was what Lucien failed to notice. With every sign of calm indifference he remarked:

"I am not feeling very well. I shall not see Madame de Chasteller until tomorrow. Will you kindly come and engage the porter in conversation while I am leaving?"

Anne-Marie looked at him in wide-eyed astonishment.

"Is he in on it too?" she wondered.

Happily for the doctor's scheme, as Lucien made a movement of impatience, she had no time to commit an indiscretion. She said nothing, put the baby on a bed in the next room, and went down to the porter's lodge.

"This purse is so heavy, I wonder if it's silver or yellow boys?"

She managed to get the porter away from the door and Lucien was able to cross the courtyard unnoticed.

He rushed home and locked himself in his room. It was only then that he allowed himself to realize the full extent of his misfortune. He was too deeply in love to be angry with Madame de Chasteller in this first moment.

"Has she ever said that she never loved anyone else before me? And, besides, living with me as with a brother because of my own imbecility, my unutterable imbecility, did she owe me any such confidence? Oh, Bathilde, can't I love you any longer?" he cried suddenly. "Must I really stop loving you?" And he burst into tears.

"A real man," he thought at the end of an hour, "would go to Madame d'Hocquincourt, whom I have neglected so stupidly, and seek his revenge."

He had to make a violent effort to get himself dressed, and, as he was leaving, he fell in a dead faint on the drawing room floor.

He came to himself a few hours later; a servant at three in the morning, going to see if he had returned, had stumbled over him.

"So, he's dead drunk again!" the man said. "It's disgusting in one's master."

Lucien heard these words plainly; and at first he thought he was in the state his servant mentioned; but suddenly the frightful truth came back to him, and he was far more unhappy than he had been the evening before.

He passed the rest of the night in a kind of delirium. For one second he had the ignoble idea of going back to Madame de Chasteller and loading her with reproaches. He was horrified at this temptation. To Lieutenant-Colonel Filloteau, who fortunately was then in command of the regiment, he wrote that he was ill, and left Nancy early in the morning, hoping that no one would see him.

It was during this lonely ride that he felt the full weight of his misfortune.

"I can no longer love Bathilde!" he would say to himself aloud, from time to time.

"I must go top speed to Paris. I must see my mother."

Military duties no longer counted for him. He felt like a man whose last hour is approaching. Everything in the world had lost all meaning; two things alone survived: his mother and Madame de Chasteller.

For his soul, worn out by sorrow, the mad idea of this trip to Paris was almost a consolation, the only consolation he could find. It was a distraction.

He sent his horse back to Nancy, and wrote to Filloteau requesting him not to let his absence become known.

"I have been sent for secretly by the Minister of War."

This lie fell involuntarily from his pen, for he had an insane fear of being pursued.

He ordered a post horse, and because of his wild appearance, some objections were raised. But he told them that he had been sent by Colonel Filloteau of the Twenty-seventh Lancers, to a company of the regiment which had gone to Rheims to wage war on the mill-workers.



The difficulties he had had in obtaining the first horse were not repeated and thirty hours later he arrived in Paris.

He was on the point of going to his mother's when it occurred to him that he would startle her if he arrived at such an hour. He went first to a furnished hotel in the vicinity, and only returned home several hours later.

END OF BOOK ONE

[*The story of Lucien Leuwen is continued in a sequel—The Telegraph.*]

# THE TELEGRAPH

## CHAPTER ONE

**I** DON'T MEAN to take advantage of my title of father to interfere with you, my son. You are free."

Thus, seated in a comfortable armchair in front of a good fire, gaily spoke the great banker M. François Leuwen, already past his prime, to Lucien his son and our hero.

The room in which this interview between father and son was taking place had just been done over with the greatest possible luxury from M. Leuwen's own designs. He had hung on the walls the three or four good engravings which had appeared during the year in France and Italy, and an admirable painting of the Roman school which he had just acquired. The white marble mantelpiece on which Lucien was leaning had been carved in Tenerani's studio, and the mirror, eight feet high by six wide, hanging over it, had been cited at the Exposition of 1834 as absolutely flawless. It was a far cry from the miserable drawing rooms of Nancy where Lucien had lived through such disquieting moments. In spite of his profound suffering, the vain and Parisian side of his nature appreciated the difference. He was no longer in the country of the barbarians; he had returned to the bosom of his native land.

"The thermometer," remarked M. Leuwen, "seems to be rising too rapidly. Will you just press that button, my dear boy—ventilator number 2 . . . there . . . back of the mantelpiece. . . . That's it. As I have said, I have no intention whatever of taking advantage of my title to *curtail* your liberty. Do exactly as you please."

Leaning on the mantelpiece, Lucien wore a somber, harried, tragic air—in short, the air we should expect in an actor play-

ing the young, love-sick hero of a tragedy. He made a painful and visible effort to alter his melancholy mien and to present an appearance of respect and that sincere filial love which, in his heart, he really felt. But the horror of his position since that last evening in Nancy had changed the well-bred expression he habitually wore in society to that of a youthful criminal appearing before his judges.

"Your mother," continued M. Leuwen, "says that you do not want to return to Nancy. Well then, by all means, don't go back to the provinces. God forbid that I should set myself up as a tyrant. Why shouldn't you commit follies, and even stupidities? There is one, however, but only one, which I should not consent to, because it entails consequences: that is marriage. You can, of course, always have recourse to *sommations respectueuses* . . . and I wouldn't quarrel with you for that. We'd argue it out together over dinner."

"But, my dear father," replied Lucien, bringing himself back from far away, "I am not thinking of marriage."

"Well, if you aren't thinking of marriage, I'll think of it for you. Consider this: I can marry you to a rich girl, and no stupider than a poor one. For it is possible that you may not be a rich man when I die. Of course, in a crazy country like this, it's quite enough to have epaulets for pride to put up with a restricted income. Clothed in a uniform, poverty is only poverty, it doesn't count, it's not a disgrace. But," continued M. Leuwen, changing his tone, "you will believe these things when you have experienced them for yourself. . . . I must seem to you an old dotard. . . . So then, brave Lieutenant, you want no more of the military state?"

"Since you are good enough to discuss things with me instead of commanding, no, I want no more of the military state. At least, not in peace time—spending all my evenings playing billiards and getting drunk in some café, and even forbidden to pick up any newspaper but the *Journal de Paris* off their

dirty marble tables. Whenever three of us officers take a stroll together, one, at least, is suspected by the other two of being a spy. The Colonel, who was once a brave soldier, under the magic wand of the *Juste-milieu* is transformed into a filthy policeman."

M. Leuwen could not help smiling. Lucien understood, and quickly added:

"Oh, I wouldn't even try to deceive so discerning a person as yourself. Believe me, father, I am not so presumptuous! But, after all, I had to begin my story somewhere. Admitted: it isn't for any reasonable reason that I want to quit the army. But it's a reasonable step I want to take, nevertheless. I have learned how to handle a lance and how to command fifty men who can do likewise. I know how to get along passably with thirty-five comrades of whom five or six are police informers. So, you see, I do know my *trade*. If there should be a war—but a real war, in which the General-in-chief does not betray his army—and if I still feel as I do today, I shall ask your permission to serve in a campaign or two. The war, as I see it, could not last longer than that, provided the General-in-chief is anything like Washington. If he is nothing but a clever and brave freebooter, like Soult, I shall retire a second time."

"Ah! so that's your political stand!" rejoined his father ironically. "The devil! it's unadulterated virtue! But politics is long! What do you want for yourself personally?"

"To live in Paris or else to go on long voyages—America, China . . ."

"Considering my age, and that of your mother, let's make it Paris. If I were Merlin, and you had but to say the word for me to arrange the material side of your destiny, what would your wish be? Would you like to be a clerk in my bank, or a private secretary to a Minister who is about to acquire enormous influence over the destinies of France, in other words, M. de Vaize? He may become Minister of the Interior tomorrow."

"M. de Vaize, that peer of France who has such a gift for administration, and is such a hard worker?"

"Precisely," replied M. Leuwen, amused and wondering at the lofty virtue of his son's aims and the stupidity of his perceptive faculties.

"I am not fond enough of money to go into your bank," replied Lucien. "I don't think enough of the *yellow metal*. I have never felt keenly, or for any length of time, the lack of it. That terrible lack would not be constantly present to cure me of my aversion. I'm afraid I'd show a want of perseverance for the second time if I decided for the bank."

"But, after I'm gone, what if you should be left poor?"

"At least, to judge by my expenditures in Nancy, I am rich now; and why shouldn't that last?"

"Because sixty-five is not twenty-four."

"But that difference . . ." Lucien's voice quivered.

"No flowery phrases, sir! I call you to order! Politics and sentiment lead us from the subject which is the order of the day:

Is he to be a god, a table or a wash-basin?

The question under consideration, and for which we must find an answer, is *you*. The bank bores you and you prefer the private office of M. de Vaize?"

"Yes, father."

"Now we come to the great difficulty: are you enough of a rogue for such an occupation?"

Lucien gave a start. His father continued to look at him with the same half amused, half serious expression. After a silence, M. Leuwen went on:

"Yes, Sir Second-Lieutenant, will you be enough of a rogue? You will be in a position to observe a lot of little maneuverings; will you be a good subordinate and help the Minister in bringing them off, or will you obstruct him? Will you pull a

long face like a young republican who believes he can reform Frenchmen and make angels out of them? *That is the question*; and you will have to give me the answer to it this very evening after the Opera for—and this is a secret—there might well be a ministerial crisis at any moment. Haven't Finance and War insulted each other again for the twentieth time? I have a finger in all this and tonight am able, and will be tomorrow, but perhaps not day after tomorrow, to feather your nest handsomely. I will not hide from you the fact that mothers with marriageable daughters will all have their eyes on you; in short, an *honorable* position, as imbeciles say; but will you be enough of a rogue to hold it? Think it over then: do you feel that you have the strength of mind to be a rogue, that is, to assist in petty rogueries; for during the last four years there has been no occasion to spill blood."

"At the most, to steal money," Lucien interrupted.

"From the *poor masses*!" interrupted M. Leuwen in his turn with a mock pathetic air. "Or to employ it somewhat differently from the way they would," he added in the same tone. "But the masses are pretty stupid and their Deputies pretty silly and not altogether disinterested. . . ."

"So, what do you want me to be?" asked Lucien with an ingenuous air.

"A rogue," replied his father, "I mean a politician, a Martignac, I won't go so far as to say a Talleyrand. That, at your age and in your newspapers, is called being a rogue. In ten years you will realize that Colbert, Sully, Cardinal Richelieu, in short, that any man who has been a politician, in other words *a leader of men*, has risen by means of that first step in roguery which I am asking you to take. You mustn't be like N—— who, when he was appointed General Secretary of Police, resigned because the job was too dirty. It is true that it was at the time they had Frotté shot by the gendarmes who were taking him to prison; and even before they started, the

gendarmes knew that their prisoner would try to escape and that they would be obliged to shoot him."

"The devil!" cried Lucien.

"Yes. And C——, Prefect of Troyes, a friend of mine and a fine fellow whom you may remember at Plancy, a man six feet tall with gray hair . . ."

"I remember him very well. Mother used to give him the nice red damask room at the château."

"That's the one. Well, he lost his Prefecture in the North, at Caen or thereabouts, because he refused to be enough of a rogue, and I thoroughly approved. Someone else took care of the Frotté affair. Ah! *my young friend*, as stage-fathers say, *you stand amazed!*"

"*It would take less than that*, as the young juvenile often replies," said Lucien. "But I believed that only the Jesuits and the Restoration . . ."

"Believe only what you see, my friend, and you will be all the wiser for it. . . . But now, because of that cursed freedom of the press," he said, laughing, "you can't treat people à la Frotté any longer. The worst that can happen to anyone at present is the loss of his money or position. . . ."

"Or a few months' imprisonment!"

"Very good. And so it's understood, an answer tonight, conclusive, clear, precise, above all, without any sentimental trimmings. Later, it may be, I can do *nothing for my son!*"

These last words were spoken with a tragic and sentimental air in the manner of the great actor Monvel.

"By the way," said M. Leuwen, turning as he reached the door, "you know, I suppose, that if it weren't for your father you would now be in the Abbaye. I wrote General D——, and told him that I had sent for you in haste because your mother was dangerously ill. I shall go to the Ministry of War to be sure that your furlough reaches the Colonel antedated. You must write to him and try to mollify him."

"I wanted to speak to you about the Abbaye. I thought of a couple of days in prison perhaps, and, after that, to settle the whole thing by resigning."

"Never resign, my friend. Only fools resign! I intend that all your life you shall be a young army officer of the greatest distinction attracted to politics, *a veritable loss to the army*, as the *Débats* would say."

## CHAPTER TWO

THE FRANTIC DISTRACTION of deciding what the categorical, the decisive answer demanded by his father should be, was the first relief Lucien had known. During his trip from Nancy to Paris he had had no time for reflection. He was running away from his anguish, and physical action took the place of moral. Since his arrival, he was disgusted with himself and with life in general. To talk to anyone was a torture to him, and he even had difficulty mastering himself sufficiently to spend an hour chatting with his mother.

The minute he was alone, he was plunged either in a somber revery, or an endless sea of heart-rending emotions, or else, trying to reason with himself, he would say:

"I am an awful idiot, I am a perfect fool! I have held as worthy what was worthless: a woman's heart; and yearning for it passionately, was powerless to win it. Either I must correct myself fundamentally or quit life altogether."

At other moments, when a ridiculous tenderness got the upper hand:

"Perhaps I could have won her if it hadn't been for that inescapable confession: 'Another has loved me, and I am . . .' For there were days when she really loved me. . . . If it



hadn't been for her embarrassing condition she would have said, 'Yes, it is true, I do love you!' But as it was, she would have had to add: 'My condition . . .' for she is honorable, of that I am sure. . . . She understood me badly. That admission would not have destroyed the strange sentiment I felt for her, a sentiment which—though I was always ashamed of it—dominated me completely.

"She has been weak, and I, am I perfect?" Then with a sad smile he would add: "But why deceive myself? Why try to reason? Even if I had discovered the most shocking things about her—what am I saying—even the most shameful vices, I would have been cruelly disillusioned, but I would not have been able to stop loving her. And what does life hold for me from now on? One long martyrdom. Where can I hope to find any happiness, or even a state exempt from pain?"

And before this melancholy sensation all others paled. He reviewed the possibilities life held for him—travel, living in Paris, great wealth, power. They aroused nothing but insuperable disgust. The last man he spoke to always seemed to him the most boring.

Only one thing could rouse him out of this profound lethargy, could stimulate his mind, and that was to live over again all that had happened to him in Nancy. When, by chance, he came upon the name of that little town on a map of France he would tremble; the name haunted him in the papers; all the regiments returning from Lunéville seemed to pass that way. The name of Nancy invariably recalled this idea:

"She could not bring herself to say: 'I have a terrible secret that I cannot tell you. . . . But if it weren't for that I should love you, and you only.' Often, it is true, I noticed that she was profoundly sad, and this seemed to me extraordinary, inexplicable at the time. . . . What if I went to Nancy and threw myself at her feet? . . ." "Yes," sneered his Mephistophelian

side, "and ask her to forgive you for *her* having given *you* horns!"

After leaving his father's study, thoughts like these seemed to besiege Lucien's heart more fiercely than ever.

"And before tomorrow morning," he said to himself in terror, "I must make a decision, I must have *faith in myself*. . . . Is there anyone in the world whose judgment I trust less than my own?"

He was utterly miserable. At the bottom of all his reasoning was this mad idea:

"What is the use of choosing a calling for the third time? Since I didn't know enough to win Madame de Chasteller, what will I ever know? When one has a nature like mine, both weak and, at the same time, one that is never satisfied, the only thing to do is bury oneself in a Trappist monastery."

The ironical part of it was that all Madame Leuwen's friends were complimenting her on the fine poise her son had acquired. "He is now a man of parts," was heard on all sides, "a son to satisfy a mother's dearest ambitions."

In his disgust with men, Lucien was careful to keep them from divining his thoughts, and always answered them with well-turned commonplaces.

Tormented by the necessity of giving a final answer that very night, he went to dine by himself, for at home he would have been forced to be agreeable or else call down upon himself a rain of epigrams; nobody was ever spared.

After dinner, Lucien wandered along the boulevard and then through the more deserted little streets. He was afraid of meeting friends on the boulevard, for every minute was precious, any minute his answer might occur to him. He came to a reading room and entered mechanically. It was dimly lighted and he hoped to find not too many people. A servant was returning a book to the young librarian. To Lucien she

seemed most attractively dressed and full of charm (Lucien was just back from the provinces).

He opened the book at random. It was by a boring moralist who divided his sermon into detached portraits after the manner of Vauvenargues: *Edgar, or the Parisian of Twenty*.

"What does a young man amount to who knows nothing of men, who has lived with genteel people only, or inferiors, or people whose interests he in no way endangers? To vouch for his merit, Edgar has only the magnificent promises he makes to himself. Edgar has received the most distinguished education possible. He can ride a horse, he manages his cabriolet admirably, he has, if you like, all the learning of a Lagrange, all the virtues of a Lafayette, and what of it? He has never experienced the effect of other people on himself. He is sure of nothing, knows nothing about other people and with all the more reason, nothing about himself. He is at best nothing but a brilliant *Perhaps*. What, after all, does he really know? He knows how to ride a horse because, if he didn't, his horse, having no manners, would throw him. The better his manners and the less like those of his horse, the less he is worth. If he lets his fleeting years between eighteen and thirty slip by without *coming to grips with necessity*, as Montaigne says, he is no longer even a *Perhaps*; public opinion dumps him in the same rut with ordinary people, pays no more attention to him, sees him as just another person like everybody else, important only because of the number of thousand-franc notes his stewards lay on his desk.

"Being a philosopher, I disregard the desk covered with bank notes, and look at the man counting them. I see in him only a sallow, worried individual reduced, by his own ineptitude, to becoming sometimes a fanatic of a party, sometimes a fanatic of the Bouffes and of Rossini, or a fanatic of the *Juste-milieu*, rejoicing in the number of dead left on the quays of Lyons, or a fanatic of Henri V forever reiterating that the

Czar is going to lend them two hundred thousand men and four hundred million francs. What do I care, what does the world care? Edgar has let himself degenerate into nothing but a dolt!

"Provided he goes to Mass, provided he banishes all amusing conversation and pleasantries on all subjects, provided he gives, as of course he does, to charity, by the time he is fifty the charlatans of all kinds, those of the Institute and those of the Archbishopric, will proclaim that he has all the virtues, and will finally honor him by making him one of the dozen Mayors of Paris. He will end up founding a hospital. *Requiescat in pace*. Colas lived, Colas died."

Lucien read every word of this morality twice and three times; he studied its meaning and its bearing. His somberly meditative air made other readers lift their noses from the *Journal du Soir* to look at him. This annoyed him, he paid and left. For some time he paced up and down the Place de Beauvau in front of the reading room. Suddenly he made up his mind:

"*I will be a rogue!*" he cried, but spent another quarter of an hour deciding whether he really had the courage. Then he called a cab and was driven to the Opera.

"I was looking for you," said his father, as Lucien met him in the foyer. They went straight to M. Leuwen's box, where they found three young ladies of the ballet, and Raimonde in her *Sylphides* costume.

"They can't understand, so don't worry," said M. Leuwen, speaking English, whereupon Mademoiselle Raimonde rose and said:

"Gentlemen, I can read in your eyes that you have things to say to each other much too serious for us. We'll go backstage. Be happy—that is, as happy as you can be without us!"

"So you think you have the soul of a scoundrel and can

enter the race for honors?" M. Leuwen asked when they were alone.

"I shall be frank with you, father. Your excessive indulgence amazes me and increases my gratitude and my respect. Something has happened to me I can't even talk to my father about, and has disgusted me with myself and with life. How am I to choose one career in preference to another? Everything is a matter of indifference to me, odious, I might say. The only state that would really suit me is that of a man dying in the hospital, or that of a savage who has to hunt and fish for his food every day. It is not a very pretty state for a man of twenty-four, and no one in the world will have confidence . . ."

"What, not even your mother?"

"Her commiseration would only intensify my martyrdom. It would make her suffer too much to see me in this unhappy state. . . ." M. Leuwen's ego was flattered by this remark, which made him feel a little closer to his son. "He has secrets he keeps from his mother," he thought, "which are not secrets to me."

"Should external things ever begin to mean something to me again," Lucien pursued, "I shall most likely find myself strangely shocked by the demands of the career I have chosen. Whereas, the duties I should be called upon to perform at your bank are hardly calculated to scandalize anyone, and for that reason, perhaps, the bank should be my choice."

"There is another very important consideration I should mention," insisted M. Leuwen. "You would better serve my interests as a private secretary to the Minister of the Interior than as the head of the correspondence department of my banking house, where your social talents would be of no use to me."

For the first time since his *cuckolding* (that is the word he used with bitter irony, for, as an added torment to his soul, he looked upon himself as a deceived husband, and attributed to himself all the ridicule and antipathy that the theater and the

world heaps upon that state, just as though such distinctions still counted), Lucien displayed tact. Principally out of curiosity, he had been about to decide in favor of the position in the Ministry. He was familiar with the bank but had not the slightest idea what the intimate life of a Ministry was like. He looked forward to meeting Comte de Vaize, that hard worker and foremost administrator of France, as the papers said, a man they compared to the Emperor's Comte Daru.

His father had hardly ceased speaking when Lucien exclaimed, with a duplicity that spoke well for the future:

"That decides me! I was rather inclined to the bank, but I now go over to the Ministry; but on one condition: that I shall not be involved in any assassinations like those of Marshal Ney, Colonel Caron, Frotté, etc. The most I'll commit myself to is a little crookedness in money matters; but, not being very sure of myself, I shall engage myself for one year only."

"The world would find that pretty short. People will say 'He can't stick to anything for more than six months.' It may be that the disgust you will perhaps feel in the beginning, in six months will change to indulgence for the foibles and knaveries of men. Out of friendship for me, will you promise not to leave the Ministry of the Rue de Grenelle for eighteen months?"

"Eighteen months then, I give you my word—provided always there's no assassination—for example, if my Minister should engage four or five officers to fight successive duels with an overly eloquent Deputy embarrassing to the Budget . . ."

"Ah, my friend," said M. Leuwen, laughing heartily, "where ever do you come from? Don't worry, there will never be any duels of the kind, and for a very good reason."

"That," continued Lucien very seriously, "would be a re-  
hibitory case, and I should leave for England immediately."

"And who, O virtuous man, is to be the judge of such crimes?"

"You, father."

"But election machinations, lies and petty rogueries will not break our contract?"

"I won't write lying pamphlets. . . ."

"God forbid! That's the affair of the writing profession. You only direct the dirty work, you never do it yourself. The principle is this: every government, even that of the United States, lies always and about everything; when it can't lie on the main issue, it lies about the details. There are good lies and bad. *Good* ones are those that the public with incomes of from fifty louis to twelve or fifteen thousand francs, believes; *excellent* ones catch some of the carriage public; *execrable* ones are those nobody believes, and that only the most shameless Ministries dare repeat. Everybody knows this. It is one of the first *maxims of state*, and must never escape your memory—or your lips."

"I enter a cave of thieves, but all their secrets, great or small, are entrusted to my *honor*!"

"Sagely spoken! The government pilfers the rights and money of the masses while swearing every morning to protect them. You remember the red string that is always found at the center of all coils of rope, big or little, in the British navy; or rather, do you remember *Werther*, for I think it was there I read this admirable thing."

"Yes, very well."

"That is the image of a corporation, or a man, having a *fundamental* lie to uphold. No truth *pure and simple*, ever. There you have the *doctrinaires*."

"Napoleon's duplicity was not so crude, not nearly," protested Lucien.

"In only two cases is hypocrisy impossible: winning a battle and being witty in conversation. Besides, you mustn't speak

of Napoleon. Leave your moral sense at the door on entering the Ministry just as, in his day, one left one's love of country on joining his guard. Will you be a chess player for eighteen months, and not be repelled by any pecuniary transactions? Will you promise to be stopped by blood alone?"

"Yes, father."

"That's settled then."

And M. Leuwen fled. Lucien noticed that he walked like a man of twenty. As a matter of fact this conversation with a simpleton had exasperated him beyond endurance.

Astonished at having begun to take an interest in politics, Lucien surveyed the audience.

"Here I am in the midst of all that is most elegant in Paris. Here, before my eyes, lies spread out in profusion all that was lacking in Nancy."

As he pronounced the beloved word, Lucien looked at his watch.

"It is eleven o'clock. On those days of trusting intimacy or of light-hearted gaiety, I would sometimes stay with her until eleven o'clock."

A very cowardly idea, which several times he had already rejected, now presented itself with an insistence he could hardly resist:

"What if I just left the Ministry flat and went back to Nancy and the regiment? If I asked her to forgive me for knowing her secret, or rather (and that would be fairer) if I never even mentioned what I saw, why shouldn't she receive me again exactly as on the day before the fatal day? Looked at reasonably, why should I be offended? I am not her lover. Just because I discovered proof that she had had a lover before she knew me?

"But would my manner toward her be the same? Sooner or later she would guess the truth. I could not help telling her if she asked me, and then my very lack of vanity would



make her despise me as a man devoid of feeling, as has happened several times before. Can I ever be at peace, feeling that if she understood me she would despise me?"

This grave question troubled Lucien's heart as his eyes rested with a sort of mechanical attention on the ladies of fashion in their boxes, one after the other. He recognized several of them; they seemed to him like provincial actresses.

"My God, I am literally going mad!" he said to himself when his opera-glass reached the end of the row of boxes. "I applied exactly the same words, *provincial actresses*, to the women who thronged the drawing rooms of Mesdames de Puylaurens and d'Hocquincourt. A man afflicted with a fever may even find the taste of sugared water bitter. The main thing is not to let anyone discover my madness. I must be careful to say only the most commonplace things and never anything that differs in the least from generally accepted ideas in any company in which I happen to find myself. Mornings, hard work at my office, if I have an office, or else long rides on horseback; evenings, I must display a passion for the theater, only natural after eight months of exile in the provinces; in the salons, when I cannot possibly avoid appearing, an inordinate appetite for écarté."

These reflections were interrupted by sudden darkness. They had turned out all the lamps.

"Well, well," he said to himself with a bitter smile, "the theater interests me so much that I am the last to leave."

A week after this interview at the Opera, the *Moniteur* carried the acceptance of the resignation of M. N——, Minister of the Interior; the nomination of M. le Comte de Vaize, Peer of France; similar announcements of four other Ministers, and much lower down, in an obscure corner of the paper:

"By decree, MM. N——, N——, and Lucien Leuwen have been named Masters of Petitions. M. Leuwen will be in charge of the private office of M. le Comte de Vaize."

### CHAPTER THREE

WHILE LUCIEN was receiving his first lessons in common sense from his father, the following was happening in Nancy:

Two days after Lucien's sudden departure, when that great event became known to M. de Sanréal, Comte Roller, and the other conspirators who had dined together for the purpose of plotting a duel with him, they could hardly believe their ears. Their admiration for Dr. Du Poirier knew no bounds. How he had managed it, they could not imagine.

Acting on first impulse, which is always generous and dangerous, these gentlemen forgot their repugnance for that ill-mannered bourgeois, and went in a body to call on him. And, like all provincials, avid for anything that has an official air and that can relieve the monotony of their lives, they gravely climbed the stairs to the third floor where the doctor lived. Among a great many commonplaces, the following sentence made Du Poirier prick up his ears:

"If you are considering Louis-Philippe's Chamber of Deputies, and you see fit to stand for election, we promise you our votes and all those that are at our disposal."

When the discourse was finished, M. Ludwig Roller stepped awkwardly forward, and stood there in silent embarrassment. His lean fair face became covered with innumerable new wrinkles and finally, making a wry face, he said glumly:

"I am the only one perhaps who owes no thanks to Dr. Du Poirier. He has deprived me of the pleasure of punishing an impudent fellow, or of trying to, at least. However, I owe this sacrifice to His Majesty, Charles X, and although I am the

injured party in this affair, I nevertheless make the same offer as these gentlemen. Yet, as a matter of fact, I am not sure, on account of the oath of allegiance to Louis-Philippe, that my conscience will permit me to assist at the elections."

In the end Dr. Du Poirier's arrogance and his mania for making speeches prevailed. It must be admitted that he spoke very well. He took good care not to explain to them why and how Lucien had left, but he was, nevertheless, able to move his listeners: Sanréal was actually in tears; even Ludwig Roller shook the doctor's hand most cordially on leaving.

As soon as the door closed, Dr. Du Poirier burst out laughing. He had talked for forty minutes, he had enjoyed an enormous success, he didn't care a rap for the gentlemen who had been listening to him—three essentials for the greatest enjoyment on the part of this singular rascal.

"So that's twenty or so votes I can count on, provided always they don't get wind of some of my methods between now and the elections. Well, it's worth thinking about. I hear on all sides that M. de Vassignies has not more than a hundred and twenty sure votes, and there will be three hundred electors present. The fanatics in his party will reproach him for the oath he would have to take to become a member of the Chamber of Deputies, considering his personal attachment to Henri V. I have the advantage of being only a plebeian. I live on the fourth floor and I don't keep a carriage. The friends of M. de Lafayette and the July Revolution, although hating us equally, are bound to prefer me to M. de Vassignies, a cousin to the Emperor of Austria, who has in his pocket the brevet of Gentleman of the Chamber (if ever there is a King's Chamber). I shall play the role of a liberal hero like Dupont de l'Eure, who is, since they buried M. de Lafayette, the one honest man of the party."

Another party leader, as honest as Du Poirier was not, but madder by far, since he exerted himself enormously without

the least hope of making any money, M. Gauthier, the republican, was also astonished, but even more hurt, by Lucien's departure.

"Not to have said a word to me, and I so fond of him! Ah, these Parisians, all manners and no feeling! I thought he was a little different from the others, I thought I could detect both warmth of heart and enthusiasm in him."

The same sentiment, but raised to an infinitely greater degree of intensity, wrung the heart of Madame de Chasteller.

"To think that he did not even write to me, to *me* whom he swore he loved so much, and whose weakness he knew very well!"

The thought was too horrible. Madame de Chasteller finally persuaded herself that Lucien's letter had been intercepted.

"Have I received any answers from Madame de Constantin?" she thought. "And I have written her at least six times since my illness."

The reader must know that Madame Cunier, postmistress of Nancy, *thought right*. As soon as M. de Pontlevé saw that his daughter was too ill to leave the house, he hurried to Madame Cunier, a tiny bigot, hardly more than four and a half feet tall. After the preliminary courtesies, he had said with unction:

"You are too good a Christian, Madam, and too good a royalist not to realize what the authority of the King (*id est* Charles X), and of the Commissioners appointed by him in his absence, should be. The elections are about to take place—a crucial event! Prudence, it is evident, demands our taking certain precautions; that is as it should be, Prague before all! And, you may rest assured, a faithful reckoning is kept of all services, but . . . and it is my painful duty Madam, to tell you . . . anyone who fails to do everything to help us in these difficult times, is against us. . . ."

At the end of the dialogue between these two solemn in-

dividuals, endlessly long and infinitely cautious and even more boring to the reader if he had to read it (for today, after forty years of pure farce, who cannot imagine the result of a conversation between a selfish old Marquis and a professional bigot?), the following articles had been agreed upon:

1. *None of the letters of the Sub-Prefect, the Mayor, the Lieutenant of gendarmes, etc. shall ever be transmitted to M. le Marquis. Madame Cunier shall show him all letters written by M. Rey, the Grand Vicar, Abbé Olivier, etc. without letting them out of her possession.*

M. de Pontlevé had directed the conversation particularly to a discussion of this first article. For, by seeming to yield in these matters, he had obtained a complete triumph in regard to the ones that interested him.

2. *All letters addressed to Madame de Chasteller shall be given to M. de Pontlevé, who takes upon himself to deliver them to Madame de Chasteller, for the moment confined to her bed.*

3. *All letters written by Madame de Chasteller shall be shown to M. de Pontlevé.*

It was tacitly agreed that the Marquis could take the latter to have them delivered by a more economical means than the post. But in that case, as the government would lose some pennies by it, Madame Cunier, its representative in this affair, might naturally expect the gift of a basket of good Rhine wine of second quality.

Not more than two days after this conversation, Madame Cunier had a packet, wrapped by herself, delivered into the hands of the Marquis' valet, old Saint-Jean. In this packet was a tiny letter from Madame de Chasteller to Madame de Constantin. It was written in a sweet, affectionate vein; Madame de Chasteller would like to ask her friend's advice but could not explain more fully in a letter.

"Meaningless chatter," M. de Pontlevé had said to himself,

putting it away in his desk. And a quarter of an hour later the old valet could be seen carrying a basket of sixteen bottles of Rhine wine to Madame Cunier.

Gentleness and nonchalance were the leading traits of Madame de Chasteller's character. Nothing ordinarily troubled that sweet and noble soul. She loved her own thoughts and solitude. But, unhappily, not being at the moment in her normal state of mind, decisions cost her nothing: she sent her valet to Darney to mail a letter addressed to Madame de Constantin.

One hour after the departure of the valet what was her joy to see Madame de Constantin herself walk into her room. It was a precious moment for the two friends.

"What! dear Bathilde," cried Madame de Constantin when, after the first transports of joy, she was finally able to speak, "six weeks without a single word from you! And it was by the merest chance, from one of the agents employed by the Prefect for the elections, that I learned of your illness and that your condition caused some anxiety. . . ."

"I have written you at least eight letters."

"This, my dear, is too much! It has come to a point where goodness makes you a dupe. . . ."

"He means well. . . ."

This meant: "My father means well," for Madame de Chasteller's indulgence did not go so far as to blind her to what was going on. But the disgust inspired by all the little tricks she observed had only one effect—to increase her love of solitude. What she enjoyed in society were the pleasures afforded by the arts, the theater, a brilliant promenade, a crowded ballroom. When she saw six persons in a drawing room she shuddered, sure that something base or mean was going to offend her painfully. The fear of this disagreeable sensation made her dread any conversation between her and another person.

It was the diametrically opposite character of Madame de

Constantin that made her such an outstanding figure in society. A vivacious, enterprising disposition, not afraid of difficulties, and a taste for making fun of the absurdities of her enemies, made people look upon her as one of the most dangerous women to offend in the whole province. Her husband, a very handsome man and quite wealthy, undertook with enthusiasm anything she suggested. For example, during two years he had thought of nothing but a windmill he had had built on an old tower near his château, which brought him in forty per cent. But the windmill had been neglected for the last three months. He now thought of nothing but the Chamber of Deputies. Since he was without wit, had never offended anyone, and had the reputation of always acquitting himself cheerfully and faithfully of any little commissions entrusted to him, his chances were very good.

"We think we can count upon the election of M. de Constantin. The Prefect gives him only his second choice because he is afraid of the Marquis de Croisans, *our rival*, my dear. The ministerial candidate is sure to lose. He's a little scoundrel and sufficiently despised already, but, to make doubly sure, the day before the elections we are going to circulate three letters of his which prove clearly enough that he indulges in the noble calling of spy. That explains his Cross last May which so incensed the entire district of Beuvron. I'll tell you, dear Bathilde, but in the strictest confidence, that our trunks are already packed." And she added, laughing, "So it would be too ridiculous to lose! But if we win, the very next day, bright and early, we leave for Paris where we shall stay for six months. And *you* are coming with us."

At these words Madame de Chasteller blushed furiously.

"My God, darling," cried Madame de Constantin, looking at her, "whatever is the matter?"

Madame de Chasteller was crimson. She heartily wished that Madame de Constantin had received the letter her valet was

at that moment mailing at Darney. In it were written the fatal words: "Someone you love has lost her heart."

Finally, with endless confusion, Madame de Chasteller said:

"Alas, dear friend, there is a man who must believe that I love him—and he is not wrong."

"What a little idiot you are!" said Madame de Constantin, laughing. "Really, if I leave you in Nancy another year or two, you will have the mentality of a nun. Great God, what harm is there if a young widow of twenty-four whose sole protector is an aged father of seventy-five who, through excess of affection for his daughter, intercepts her letters, thinks of choosing a husband, a helpmate, a protector? . . ."

"Alas, all those good reasons have nothing to do with it. I should be insincere if I admitted your praise. It so happens that he is rich and well-bred, but if he had been poor and the son of a farmer it would have made no difference."

Madame de Constantin demanded a full account; nothing interested her so much as stories of true love, and she was passionately fond of Madame de Chasteller.

"He began by falling off his horse twice, right under my windows. . . ."

Madame de Constantin burst out laughing and couldn't stop; Madame de Chasteller was hurt. Finally, wiping her eyes, Madame de Constantin succeeded in saying in little gasps:

"Well . . . my dear Bathilde . . . you can't apply . . . to this mighty conqueror of yours . . . that indispensable expression in the provinces: *he is a handsome cavalier!*"

This injustice to Lucien redoubled the enthusiasm with which Madame de Chasteller told her friend all that had happened in the last six months. But the sentimental aspects of her story failed to touch Madame de Constantin, she did not believe in these *grandes passions*. She grew thoughtful, nevertheless, toward the end of the recital, and when it was finished, remained silent.



"Your M. Leuwen," she said at length, "is he, I wonder, a terrible Don Juan for us poor females, or is he a child who lacks experience? There is nothing natural about his conduct."

"Say rather, there is nothing ordinary about it, nothing calculated in advance," replied Madame de Chasteller with a vivacity very rare in her. And she added with a sort of rapture:

"That is why he is so dear to me. He is not a simpleton who has read a lot of novels."

The discussion between the two friends on this subject was endless. Madame de Constantin had at first hoped for a perfectly proper little love affair that, if all requirements were met, could lead to an advantageous marriage, otherwise a trip to Italy or the distractions of a winter in Paris that would efface what remained of the ravages produced by three months of daily intercourse. Instead of that she found this gentle, timid, idle young woman whom nothing disturbed, quite out of her mind and ready for anything.

"My heart tells me," Madame de Chasteller kept saying, "that he has basely deserted me. Think of it, not even writing!"

"But of all the letters I wrote you, not a single one has reached you," Madame de Constantin replied, for she had a quality, very rare in this age: she was never insincere with her friend, even for her own good; lying, it seemed to her, would kill their friendship.

"Why couldn't he have said to a postilion," went on Madame de Chasteller with a very singular show of passion, "why couldn't he have said to a postilion ten leagues from here: 'My friend, here are a hundred francs, go to Nancy, Rue de la Pompe, and give this letter to Madame de Chasteller. Give the letter to her personally and to no one else.'"

"And it is nine days since he left! I have never openly admitted my suspicions as to the fate of my letters, but he knows

what I think about everything. My heart tells me he knows that my letters are opened."

## CHAPTER FOUR

SUCH MISGIVINGS furnished Madame de Chasteller with a definite objection to Madame de Constantin's proposal that she should go with her to Paris, if Madame de Constantin's husband were elected Deputy.

"Wouldn't it look as though I were running after M. Leuwen?" she asked.

For the next two weeks this objection occupied all the most intimate conversations between the two friends.

Three days after Madame de Constantin's arrival, Mademoiselle Bérard, the companion, was handsomely paid, and dismissed. With her customary dispatch, Madame de Constantin questioned the estimable Mademoiselle Beaulieu and promptly dismissed Anne-Marie, Madame de Chasteller's other personal maid, as well.

The Marquis de Pontlevé, watching these little domestic arrangements with great attention, realized that he had an irresistible rival in his daughter's friend.

It was as Madame de Constantin had hoped: her bustling activity restored Madame de Chasteller to health. Madame de Constantin insisted on being taken into society constantly, and on this pretext forced her friend to appear almost every evening in the drawing rooms of Mesdames de Puylaurens, d'Hocquincourt, de Marcilly, de Serpierre, de Commercy, etc. Her object was to demonstrate to society that Madame de Chasteller was not inconsolable over the departure of Lucien.

"Without meaning to," she thought, "my little Bathilde

must have committed some indiscretion. And if we don't succeed in silencing malicious gossip, it can pursue us even to Paris. Her eyes are so beautiful that they speak without her consent,

*E sotto l'usbergo del sentirsi pura*

they must have looked at that young officer with a look that no explanation on earth could excuse."

One evening in the carriage, on their way to Madame de Puylaurens', Madame de Constantin inquired:

"Among the young men here in Nancy, which one is the most active, the most insolent, the most influential?"

"M. de Sanréal, without a doubt," replied Madame de Chasteller, smiling.

"Very well then, I am going to tackle this noble soul for your sake . . . for my own too! Tell me, does he control any votes?"

"There are his notaries, his agent, his stewards. Since he has an income of at least forty thousand pounds, he is a popular young man."

"What does he do?"

"He gets drunk morning, noon and night. And he has horses."

"In short, he is bored. I will seduce him. Has any passable woman ever tried to seduce him before?"

"I doubt it. She would first have to discover some way of not dying of boredom listening to him."

On those days of profound melancholy when Madame de Chasteller felt an irresistible aversion to going out, Madame de Constantin would cry:

"I must go vote-hunting for my husband! In the vast field of intrigue, nothing should be *neglected*. Four votes, three votes, coming from the district of Nancy, might decide everything. Do you realize that I am dying to hear Rubini, and as

long as my stingy father-in-law lives, there is only one way in the world for me to get to Paris: via the Chamber of Deputies!"

It did not take long for Madame de Constantin to discover under Dr. Du Poirier's coarse and unprepossessing shell, his superior intelligence, and a real intimacy sprang up between them. This great bear had never known a pretty woman—unless she was ill—to address two consecutive words to him. Doctors in the provinces had not yet taken the place of priests.

"You must become our colleague, dear Doctor," she said to him. "We will vote together and make and unmake Ministers. . . . Our dinners will be every bit as good as theirs—you will give me your vote, won't you? If we always vote together, our twelve votes will make themselves felt. . . . Oh, but I am forgetting . . . you are a furious legitimist and we are moderate anti-republicans."

A few days later Madame de Constantin made a very useful discovery: Madame d'Hocquincourt was in despair over Lucien's departure. The ferocious silence of this usually gay and talkative young woman, formerly the life of Nancy society, saved Madame de Chasteller; hardly anyone thought of saying that Madame de Chasteller too had lost her *adorer*. Madame d'Hocquincourt never opened her lips except to talk of Paris and her plans for a little trip as soon as the elections were over.

One day when she spoke of going to Paris Madame de Serpierre maliciously said to her:

"Then you will see M. d'Antin again."

And much to the amusement of Madame de Constantin, Madame d'Hocquincourt stared at Madame de Serpierre with an expression of utter amazement. Madame d'Hocquincourt had forgotten the very existence of M. d'Antin, her former lover!

It was only in Madame de Serpierre's drawing room that

Madame de Constantin heard any remarks inimical to her friend.

"But how in the world," she cried, "could anyone expect to marry so painfully, so ridiculously ugly a daughter as Théodelinde de Serpierre to a rich young man from Paris, and especially as that young man had never given her a single word of encouragement? It is literally crazy. It would take millions to get a Parisian to enter a drawing room with such a fright on his arm."

"M. Leuwen is not like that, you don't know him! If he loved someone, he would scorn society's disapproval, or rather he wouldn't even notice it."

And for five minutes Madame de Chasteller enlarged upon Lucien's character. These explanations had the effect of making Madame de Constantin very thoughtful.

But Madame de Constantin had only to see Mademoiselle Théodelinde five or six times to be touched by the tender friendship the girl cherished for Lucien. It was not love, the poor girl would never have dared; she knew too well, and even exaggerated, all the disadvantages of her face and figure. It was her mother who had entertained expectations based on her belief that her noble Lorraine lineage would be too great an honor to be resisted by a simple plebeian.

Madame de Constantin was equally delighted with old M. de Serpierre. He had a heart overflowing with kindness, and spent his time defending inhuman doctrines.

"It reminds me," said Madame de Constantin to her friend, "how, at the *Sacré Cœur*, they insisted on our admiring the worthy Duc N—— because he would have his carriage call for him at seven in the morning in the middle of February, to go petitioning for the *amputated hand*. The law of sacrilege was under discussion in the Chamber of Deputies at the time, and the question of whether to make amputation of the right

hand the penalty for thieves who stole holy vessels from the churches!"

Soon Madame de Constantin with her pretty face (a little commonplace perhaps), her vitality, her ingratiating courtesy, her unfailing wit, had made her friend's peace with the house of de Serpierre. It is true that the last time the delicate subject was broached, Madame de Serpierre had stubbornly insisted, in her unpleasant way:

"I have my own opinion."

"As you please, my dear," rejoined the kindly former King's Lieutenant, "but let's drop the subject, or else malicious tongues will say that we are husband-hunting."

It had been at least six years since M. de Serpierre had made a remark of such severity. It marked an epoch in the family, and the reputation of Lucien, who had figured as the faithless seducer of Mademoiselle Théodelinde, was restored.

Every day, for fear of meeting *electors* to whom they would have to be agreeable, the two friends took long walks in the woods near The Green Huntsman. Madame de Chasteller loved to revisit this charming coffee-house. It was there that the ultimatum on the trip to Paris was finally proclaimed.

"Even your conscience, no matter how finical, will not be able to apply the humiliating and vulgar expression, *running after a lover*, if you swear to yourself not to speak to him even if you see him in Paris."

"So be it then!" agreed Madame de Chasteller, eagerly grasping at the suggestion. "On those conditions I consent, my scruples vanish. If ever I meet him in the Bois de Boulogne, if he comes up and speaks to me, I swear I will not reply a single word until I have seen The Green Huntsman again."

Madame de Constantin looked at her in surprise.

"In this way, if I am tempted to speak to him," Madame de Chasteller explained, "I shall be obliged to leave for Nancy,

and only after having been here again will I allow myself to reply."

There was a silence.

"That is a vow," Madame de Chasteller went on, with a seriousness that made Madame de Constantin smile, then threw her into a thoughtful mood.

Next day, as they were driving out to The Green Huntsman, Madame de Constantin noticed a framed picture in the carriage. It was a beautiful Saint Cecilia, engraved by Perfetti, that Lucien had once given Madame de Chasteller. She handed it to the proprietor of the café, asking him to hang it over the bar.

"*I may ask for it back again some day. And,*" she added in lowered tone to Madame de Constantin as they moved away, "never will I be so weak as to utter a single word to M. Leuwen as long as that engraving hangs here. It was here that my *fatal* infatuation began."

"Ah, no! I protest the word *fatal*! Thank heaven love is not a *duty* but a pleasure, so don't take it so tragically. When your present age and mine add up to fifty, then we can be as sad, reasonable, and lugubrious as you please. We'll follow the lovely reasoning of my father-in-law: 'It's raining? So much the worse! It's a fine day? Still, so much the worse!' You have been bored to death while pretending to be angry with Paris, without being angry at all. A handsome young man appears . . ."

"But he isn't so very good looking . . ."

"A young man—no epithets—appears; you fall in love with him; your mind is occupied, boredom flies away, and you call that *fatal*!"

Now that the departure was settled, terrible scenes followed on the subject with M. de Pontlevé. Happily Madame de Constantin was there to bear the brunt of the discussions, and the Marquis had a deadly fear of her frequently ironic gaiety.

"That woman *says everything*; it isn't difficult to be amusing when there is nothing you dare not say," he complained to Madame de Puylaurens. "It isn't difficult to be witty when you allow yourself such liberties."

"Very well, my dear Marquis, try inviting Madame de Serpierre, who is right over there, to say anything she pleases, and see how amusing it will be!"

"Nothing but irony," said M. de Pontlevé peevishly. "Nothing is sacred to that woman!"

"No one on earth has ever had such wit as Madame de Constantin," cried M. de Sanréal, putting in his word with an air of importance, "and if she makes fun of people's ridiculous pretensions, whose fault is it?"

"Their pretentiousness, of course!" agreed Madame de Puylaurens, curious to see the two men sparring at each other.

"Yes," added Sanréal with a portentous air, "pretentiousness, tyranny!"

Happy to have had an idea, happier still to be approved by Madame de Puylaurens, something that had never happened to him before, M. de Sanréal kept turning his poor little idea upside down and inside out, as he held forth for a quarter of an hour.

"Could anything be funnier," whispered Madame de Constantin to Madame de Puylaurens, "than a man without wit who encounters an idea? It's scandalous!" And the burst of laughter from the two ladies was taken by Sanréal as a mark of approbation.

Madame de Constantin accepted two or three magnificent dinners in her honor, attended by all the élite of Nancy. Whenever M. de Sanréal, trying his best to pay court to her, could find absolutely nothing to say, she would ask him for his vote for the hundredth time. She was sure of some bizarre protestation; he would swear that he was hers to command—himself, his agent, his notaries, and his intendants.



"And moreover, Madam, I am coming to Paris to see you."

"But in Paris I can only receive you once a week," she said, glancing at Madame de Puylaurens. "Here we all know each other, but in Paris you would compromise me—a young man like you, with your fortune, your horses, your position in the world! Once a week—what am I saying? Two calls a month at the most."

Never in his life had Sanréal enjoyed himself so much. If only he could have had all the amiable things Madame de Constantin said to him deposed before a notary—"that witty woman," as he repeated at least twenty times a day, and in stentorian tones that impressed people and made them believe him.

For her sake he quarreled with M. de Pontlevé, declaring that he intended to vote, and was ready to take the oath of allegiance to Louis-Philippe.

"Who believes in oaths in France today? Louis-Philippe doesn't even believe in his own. If I were held up by thieves in the woods, and they were three against one and insisted upon my taking an oath, would I refuse? Here the government is the thief who wants to rob me of my right, in common with all Frenchmen, to elect a deputy. The government has its Prefects, its police—am I going to fight them? No, egad! I'll pay it in the same coin in which it pays the partisans of the *Glorious Days*."

In what pamphlet had M. de Sanréal read the last three sentences? For no one would ever accuse him of having thought them up himself. Madame de Constantin, who supplied him with ideas every evening, always took good care never to advance arguments that could shock the Prefect of the Department. This was the famous M. Dumoral, notorious renegade, who before 1830 had been a liberal orator, had even gone to prison, and never stopped talking of his eight months in Sainte-Pélagie under Charles X. As a matter of fact he was much less

stupid now, having even acquired a certain amount of finesse since his change of religion, and Madame de Constantin would never have risked a really imprudent remark.

What M. Dumoral wanted was an administrative position of 40,000 francs and Paris, and for the sake of his ambition, he was obliged to swallow insults two or three times a day. Madame de Constantin knew that a man on such a diet is not very susceptible to the charms of a pretty woman. For the moment M. Dumoral was anxious to make a brilliant show at the elections and then to proceed to another Prefecture. The sarcasms of *L'Aurore* (M. Gauthier's paper), its eternal quotations of his former liberal opinions, had completely *demoralized* him (the local word for it) in the Department.

We will now suppress eight or ten pages on the sayings and doings of M. Dumoral preparing for the elections. All quite true, but true after the fashion of a morgue, and the sort of truth we willingly leave to the duodecimo novels for chambermaids. Let us now return to Paris and M. Dumoral's Minister. The machinations of men in power are somewhat less depressing in Paris than in the provinces.

## CHAPTER FIVE

THE EVENING of the day Lucien's name figured so gloriously in the *Moniteur*, that Master of Petitions, dead with fatigue and disgust, was sitting in an obscure corner of his mother's drawing room looking like Molière's Misanthrope. Overwhelmed by the endless congratulations to which he had been exposed all day, the words *superb career, magnificent future, the first brilliant step* danced before his eyes and made his head ache. He was horribly weary

of his replies—for the most part neither very gracious nor very felicitous—to so many compliments, all of them well-turned and even more gracefully spoken: a talent pre-eminently Parisian.

“So this is happiness!” he said to his mother when they were alone.

“My son,” she replied, “there is no such thing as happiness when one is extremely tired, unless the mind is stimulated, or the imagination succeeds in painting a rosy picture of happiness to come. Compliments repeated over and over again are boring, and you are neither childish enough, nor old enough, nor ambitious enough, nor vain enough, to be dazzled by the uniform of a Master of Petitions.”

M. Leuwen did not put in an appearance until after the Opera.

“Tomorrow morning at eight o’clock,” he said to his son, “if you have nothing better to do, I will present you to your Minister.”

Next morning at five minutes to eight, Lucien was in the little antechamber leading to his father’s apartment.

Eight o’clock struck . . . eight-fifteen.

“Not for anything in the world,” said Anselm, M. Leuwen’s old valet, “would I go into Monsieur’s room before he rings.”

At last, at ten-thirty the bell was heard.

“I am sorry to have kept you waiting, my friend,” M. Leuwen began amiably.

“It doesn’t matter as far as I am concerned,” Lucien hastened to reply, “but what about the Minister?”

“That is what the Minister is for, to wait for me if necessary. You may be sure he needs me more than I need him. He needs my bank, and is afraid of my salon. But, to impose two hours of boredom on you, my son, whom I love, *and whom I esteem*,” he added, laughing, “that is a different matter. I admit I heard eight o’clock strike, but as I was perspiring a bit

I thought I had better wait. At sixty-five life is a problem . . . and one should not complicate it with imaginary difficulties.

"But look at you!" he interrupted himself. "What a way to dress. You look very, very young! Go and put on something not quite so spick and span, a black waistcoat, comb your hair carelessly, cough now and then . . . try to appear at least twenty-eight or thirty. With imbeciles, the first impression counts for a lot and you must always treat a Minister as though he were an imbecile, he hasn't time to think. Remember, never dress too well as long as you are in the government."

After M. Leuwen had spent another full hour dressing, they left. M. de Vaize had not gone out and M. Leuwen's name produced an instant effect. He was introduced without delay.

"His Excellency was waiting for us," commented M. Leuwen as they crossed several rooms where petitioners were ranged according to merit and their rank in the world.

M. Leuwen and his son found the Minister very busy sorting three or four hundred letters. He was seated at a rose-wood desk, covered with carvings in the worst possible taste.

"You find me in the midst of preparing my ministerial circular which will be torn to shreds by the *National*, the *Gazette*, etc., and these clerks of mine have kept me waiting here two hours for the circulars of my predecessors. I am curious to see how they got over the hurdle. I am sorry not to have it ready to show you. A man of your intelligence would immediately spot anything that might offer an opening to my critics."

His Excellency continued in the same vein for the next twenty minutes. During this time Lucien studied him carefully. M. de Vaize appeared to be about fifty years of age. He was tall, with quite a good figure. Nice hair turning gray, very regular features, a well poised head, all prepossessed a person in his favor. But this impression was of short duration. At second glance one noticed his low forehead, covered with

wrinkles, that precluded all idea of thought. Lucien was shocked to find in this great executive a more than vulgar air, the aspect of a lackey. His long arms seemed to get in his way; and what was worse, Lucien thought he detected in His Excellency an evident desire to put on airs. He talked too loudly and listened to himself talk.

Practically interrupting this ministerial flow of eloquence, M. Leuwen finally succeeded in getting in the classic words:

"I have the honor of presenting my son to Your Excellency."

"I shall make a friend of him, I hope," replied the Minister graciously. "He will be my first aide-de-camp. There is plenty of work ahead. I shall have to cram into my head the different characters of all my eighty-six Prefects, stimulate the phlegmatic, restrain exaggerated zeal that only adds the auxiliary of anger to the interests of the opposing party, enlighten those of limited intelligence. That poor N—— (his predecessor) has left everything in complete disorder, and the clerks I have inherited, instead of replying to my questions with facts, wax rhetorical.

"You see me seated at the desk of that poor Corbière. When, in the Chamber of Peers, I used to combat his little voice of a cat being skinned alive, who would have thought that I should one day be sitting in his chair? He had a shallow mind and was short-sighted, but within the limited range of his vision he was not lacking in common sense. He did possess discernment, but it was at the antipodes of eloquence; besides, he had that look of an angry cat which made everyone want to contradict him. M. de Villèle would have done better to get someone more eloquent as his assistant, Martignac for example."

Here followed a dissertation on M. de Villèle's system. After that M. de Vaize proved that justice was the primary need of society. From there he went on to explain how good faith is the foundation of credit. He then told his visitors that a

biased and unjust government *commits suicide* with its own hands, etc., etc.

The presence of M. Leuwen had somewhat subdued his style in the beginning, but soon, drunk with his own words, he forgot that he was talking to a man whose epigrams were repeated from one end of Paris to the other. He assumed an air of importance and ended up with a eulogy on the probity of his predecessor, who, as was generally believed, had tucked away eight hundred thousand francs in the one year he had been Minister.

"All this is far too magnanimous for me, my dear Count," said M. Leuwen, as he made his escape.

But now M. de Vaize was in a talking vein. He proved to his private secretary at great length that without probity one cannot be a great Minister. Lucien, sole object of his eloquence, found him decidedly vulgar.

At last His Excellency installed Lucien at a magnificent desk only a step or two from his own private quarters. Lucien was surprised to find that the windows of his office looked out over a lovely garden, and it struck him as a curious contrast to the barrenness of his recent sensations. He gazed tenderly down upon the trees.

As he seated himself he saw powder on the back of the arm-chair.

"My predecessor," he said to himself, laughing, "was not burdened with such thoughts."

A little later, reading this predecessor's sober handwriting, very large and very well formed, he had an overwhelming sensation of the superannuated past.

"This office reeks of meaningless eloquence and empty bombast."

He took down several engravings of the French School: Ulysses halting Penelope's chariot by M. Fragonard or M. Le Barbier . . . and sent them to other offices. (Later he hung

some engravings of Anderloni and Morghen in their place.)

In an hour the Minister returned and gave Lucien a list of twenty-five persons who were to receive invitations for the next day.

"I have arranged that when the clock of the Ministry strikes the hour, the porter shall bring you all the letters that have arrived for me. You will promptly give me those from the Tuileries or the Ministries, you will then open the rest and make me a résumé of their contents—a line or two at the most: my time is precious."

Hardly had the Minister left when eight or ten clerks came to make the acquaintance of the Master of Petitions whose cold and resolute manner, it seemed to them, boded ill for the future.

During the whole day, filled almost exclusively with prescribed and flagrantly absurd formalities, Lucien maintained an air that was even colder and more ironic than in the regiment. He seemed to be separated by at least ten years from that deplorable ordeal of his arrival at Nancy, when he had adopted a cold demeanor in order to avoid a witticism that might have led to a duel. Often in those days he had had all the difficulty in the world to repress his natural exuberance; and was often tempted to risk all the coarse pleasantries and all the duels on earth, in order to join his comrades of the Twenty-seventh in their sports. Today his only effort was to hide the profound disgust that all his fellow men inspired. His former coldness seemed to him the blithe sulkiness of a boy of fifteen. Now he had a sensation of swimming in mud. While he replied to the greetings of all the clerks who came to see him, he was thinking to himself:

"In Nancy I was a dupe because I wasn't skeptical enough. I had the simplicity and gullibility of an honest heart, I was not enough of a rogue. Oh, how very wise was my father's

question: *Are you enough of a rogue?* I should either join the Trappists in a hurry, or else make myself as sincere as all these head clerks and deputy head clerks who come to welcome the honorable Master of Petitions. . . . But with the Trappists, who lead an innocent life whose worst crime consists in imposing a bit on a few peasants in the neighborhood or a few novices, would my unsatisfied vanity give me a moment's peace? How could I bear the idea of being mentally inferior to all my contemporaries? . . . So let's learn then, if not to steal, at least to *connive at the thefts of His Excellency*, like all these clerks I have met today."

Such ideas gave Lucien an air that was hardly calculated to inspire easy and polished conversation with people who were meeting him for the first time. After his first day at the Ministry, Lucien's misanthropy took this form: he never gave his fellow men a thought when he was not with them, but their presence for any length of time seemed importunate and finally insupportable.

The last straw was finding his father in a very gay mood when he got back home.

"Here are two little summonses," cried the latter, "which are the natural sequel to your new dignities of this morning."

They were two subscription cards to the Opera and the Bouffes.

"Ah, but these pleasures terrify me, dear father."

"For my sake, you agreed to maintain a certain position in the world for eighteen months instead of one year. To complete this gracious favor, promise me that you will spend half an hour every evening in these *temples of pleasure*, especially when the pleasure is about over, toward eleven o'clock."

"I promise. But am I not then to have even one poor little peaceful hour out of my entire day?"

"And what about Sunday?"



The second day the Minister said to Lucien:

"I am going to entrust to you the making of appointments with the crowds of people that always flock around a new Minister. Get rid of the Parisian intriguer who is mixed up with women of doubtful virtue—such people are capable of anything, even of quite sinister things. Be nice to the poor provincial devil obsessed by some crazy idea. The petitioner who wears a shabby suit with extreme elegance is a rascal; he lives in Paris; if he mattered at all, I would have met him in some drawing room, or he would find someone to present him and to recommend him."

A few days later Lucien, by mistake, invited to dinner at the Minister's a painter who was very witty and whose name, Lacroix, was the same as that of a Prefect dismissed by M. de Polignac. And this was a dinner to which only Prefects were to be invited.

That evening when the Comte de Vaize was alone in his drawing room with his wife and Lucien, he laughed with great glee over the discomfiture of all the assembled Prefects who, assuming the painter to be a candidate for a Prefecture and destined to replace one of them, had viewed him with jaundiced eye.

"And to complete the misunderstanding," said the Minister, "a dozen times during dinner, I turned to Lacroix and talked to him earnestly on matters pertaining to administrative policies."

"So that explains why he looked so bored and so boring," exclaimed little Comtesse de Vaize in her soft timid voice. "He was hardly recognizable; I observed his clever little face above the flowers of the centerpiece, and couldn't imagine what had happened to him. He will revile your dinner."

"No one reviles a Minister's dinner," retorted the Comte de Vaize.

"The lion's paw," thought Lucien.

Madame de Vaize, who was very sensitive to such savage slaps, looked crestfallen.

"This little Leuwen," the Minister said to himself, "will make me cut a sorry figure with his father."

"So, Lacroix wants patronage for his paintings, does he?" he went on gaily. "And, egad, on your recommendation, he shall have it. I notice he manages to come here twice a week."

"You are serious? You promise me that for him, and without his asking?"

"My word on it!"

"In that case, I'll make of him a real friend of the house."

"So, Madam, you will have two clever men: Messieurs Lacroix and Leuwen."

From this gracious remark the Minister proceeded to banter Lucien relentlessly on his blunder in inviting the historical painter to the dinner of Prefects. This acted as a spur to Lucien, who replied to His Excellency in a tone of perfect equality, thereby shocking the latter exceedingly. Perceiving this, Lucien continued to talk with an ease that amazed and amused him.

He enjoyed being with Madame de Vaize—pretty, kind, and very shy. When she was talking to him she entirely forgot that she was a young woman and he a young man, an arrangement which suited our hero perfectly.

"Here I am," he thought, "on terms of intimacy with two people whose faces I had never set eyes on a week ago, one of whom amuses me when he attacks me, and the other of whom pleases me."

Lucien gave his work the closest attention; it seemed to him that the Minister wanted to make the most of his blunder as an excuse for attributing to him the amiable heedlessness of extreme youth.

"You are a very great administrator, *M. le Comte*," he said to himself, "for which I respect you, but *epigram in hand* I

am your equal and, considering your honorific position, I prefer to risk being a bit too firm to letting you infringe upon my dignity. It will show you, besides, that I don't give a rap for my office, whereas you adore yours."

At the end of one week of ministerial life, Lucien was back on earth again. He had surmounted the state of demoralization he had been in ever since that last evening in Nancy. His first pang of remorse came at the thought of Gauthier, to whom he had never written. He at once sent him an interminable and, it must be admitted, a rather imprudent letter. He signed the first name that came into his head and sent it to the Prefect of Strasbourg, asking him to forward it for him.

"Coming from Strasbourg," he thought, "it may escape Madame Cunier and that renegade Dumoral's Chief of Police."

He was amused to read, in the different departments, the correspondence of M. Dumoral, Prefect of Nancy, which seemed to give M. de Vaize so much concern. All France at that moment was in the fever of the elections and of the Spanish question. M. Dumoral's letters about Nancy entertained Lucien no end: M. de Vassignies was represented as a very dangerous man, Du Poirier as someone less to be feared and who could be had with a Cross and a tobacco shop for his sister. These poor Prefects trembling for fear of losing their elections, and exaggerating their difficulties to their Ministers, had the gift of making Lucien forget his melancholy.

Such was Lucien's life: six hours at the office in the Rue de Grenelle every day, at least one hour at the Opera every evening. Without, of course, admitting as much, his father had seen to it that every minute of his time was occupied.

"It is the best guarantee against a bullet," he said to Madame Leuwen, "though I very much doubt if we have reached such an extremity. His virtue, which is so awfully boring, would be enough to keep him from leaving us forever. Besides he has

a natural love of life and a great curiosity to come to grips with the world."

For the sake of his wife M. Leuwen had given himself up whole-heartedly to this problem.

"You cannot live without your son," he said; "I cannot live without you. And I confess that since I have been observing him closely he no longer seems to me so dull. He sometimes even finds a ready rejoinder to his Minister's epigrams, and Madame de Vaize admires him. Everything considered, Lucien's somewhat callow repartee is really worth more than the old, pointless witticisms of de Vaize. . . . It is still to be seen how he will take His Excellency's first piece of rascality."

"Lucien still has the highest regard for M. de Vaize's talents."

"That is our only hope. It is an admiration we must carefully cultivate. It is our capital. After I have denied as well as I can the first flagrant blow to honesty, my only recourse will be to say: 'Is a Minister of such talent overpaid at forty thousand francs a year?' Thereupon I will prove that Sully was a thief. Three or four days later I'll bring up my reserves—which are superb: In 1796, in Italy, General Bonaparte stole. Would you have preferred an honest man like Moreau, letting himself be beaten in 1799 at Cassano, at Novi, and so on? Moreau cost the Treasury perhaps two hundred thousand francs, Bonaparte three million. . . . I trust Lucien will not be able to find an answer, and I'll guarantee that he will stay in Paris as long as he admires M. de Vaize."

"If we can just get through to the end of the year, he will have forgotten Madame de Chasteller."

"I am not so sure! You have endowed him with such a constant heart! In spite of my abominable conduct you have never been able to get over loving me. For a heart all of a piece such as you have given your son, a new interest is necessary. I am

waiting for a favorable occasion to present him to Madame Grandet."

"She is certainly very pretty, very young, and very brilliant."

"And, besides, is absolutely bent on having a *grande passion*."

"But if Lucien senses affectation he will take to his heels. . . ."

One very sunny day, towards two-thirty in the afternoon, the Minister entered Lucien's office, flushed, wild-eyed, and quite beside himself.

"You must go to your father at once. . . . But first copy this telegraphic dispatch. . . . Be good enough also to make a copy of this note I am sending to the *Journal de Paris*. . . . You perceive the full importance of the thing and its confidential nature . . ." and while Lucien was busy copying, the Minister added:

"For very good reasons I should advise your not taking the cabriolet of the Ministry. Get a cab across the street, give the driver six francs in advance, and for God's sake find your father before the Bourse closes. It closes at half-past-three, as you know."

Seeing him enter, Lucien thought he had come to tell him that he was putting someone else in his place, but at the word *telegraph* Lucien understood. The Minister fled, but came rushing back again to say:

"You will bring me back the two copies you have just made, sir, to me and to no one else, and on your life, don't show it to a soul but your father!"

Having said this he again disappeared.

"What a rude, what a ridiculous tone to use," said Lucien to himself. "Such an offensive tone inclines one to think of too easy a revenge."

"And so," he thought, as he went to find a cab, "all my suspicions are confirmed. His Excellency is certainly playing the

market, and I am purely and simply an accomplice in a rascally practice."

Lucien had great difficulty finding his father. Finally, as it was pleasantly cold with still a little sunshine, he thought of looking for him on the boulevard, and at last found him in contemplation before a huge fish displayed at the corner of the Rue de Choiseul.

M. Leuwen was not pleased to see him, and refused to get into the cab.

"Devil take your old rattletrap! All the stock markets on earth can close without me before I'll ride in anything but my own carriage!"

Lucien hurried to get his father's carriage, which was waiting for him at the corner of the Rue de la Paix. At last, at a quarter-past-three as the Bourse was about to close, M. Leuwen arrived.

He did not return home until six o'clock.

"Go back to your Minister and give him this note. You may be surprised at your reception."

Lucien went off extremely vexed at having to take part in shady transactions, "Minister or no Minister I shall take a firm tone with him."

He found the Minister surrounded by twenty Generals. "All the more reason for firmness," he said to himself. Dinner had been announced and Marshal N—— had already given Madame de Vaize his arm. The Minister was standing in the middle of the drawing room perorating, but as soon as he caught sight of Lucien he stopped short in the middle of a sentence and dashed out of the room, beckoning Lucien to follow him. When they were in his study he quickly locked the door and began poring over M. Leuwen's letter. He was almost mad with joy, took Lucien in his arms and hugged him over and over again. . . . With his black jacket buttoned up to his chin Lucien stood and surveyed him with disgust.

"So this is a thief," he said to himself, "and a thief at work! And no matter whether he is elated or worried his gestures are always those of a lackey."

The Minister had quite forgotten his dinner party; this was his first operation on the Bourse, and he was beside himself with joy at having made a few thousand francs. The thing that was most amusing was that he seemed to be proud of himself, as though now he were truly a Minister in every sense of the word.

"This is marvelous, my friend," he said to Lucien as they went back to the dining room. . . . "And tomorrow we shall have to see about re-selling."

Everyone was seated at the table, but out of deference to His Excellency they had not dared to begin to eat. Poor Madame de Vaize was flushed and perspiring with anxiety. The twenty-five guests, sitting in silence and well aware that they should be talking, could find nothing to say. They presented a ridiculous spectacle in their embarrassed silence, interrupted from time to time by Madame de Vaize's timid and hardly audible voice as she offered a plate of soup to the Marshal sitting on her right. The attention of the whole company became centered on his refusal. It was altogether comical.

So wrought-up was the Minister that he had completely lost that famous poise of his, so much vaunted by the newspapers. Still in a flurry he seated himself at the table murmuring: "A dispatch from the Tuileries . . ."

The soup was cold, and a chill hung over the whole company. Everyone was ill at ease, and the silence so complete that Lucien caught a whispered remark of a Colonel sitting next to him to a General on his other side.

"He seems very much upset. Could he have fallen from grace?"

"I should say that joy was uppermost," replied the old, white-haired General in the same tone.

That evening at the Opera all Lucien's attention was taken up by the grievous thought:

"My father is a party to this maneuver. . . . One could, I suppose, retort that it is simply a function of his calling as banker. He has some information and profits by it, he does not betray his oath of office. . . . Yet without a fence there would be no thieves."

This reply did nothing to restore his peace of mind. All the charms of Mademoiselle Raimonde, who came to the box as soon as she saw him, failed to draw a word out of him. His *former self* had got the upper hand.

"Mornings with thieves, evenings with wenches!" he thought bitterly. "But what does public opinion amount to? It will respect me for my mornings and despise me for my evenings spent with this poor girl. Beautiful ladies are very much like the Academy in its treatment of romanticism: they are both litigants and judge. . . . Ah! if I could only talk of all these things with . . ."

He stopped just as he was about to pronounce the name—Bathilde!

The next day M. de Vaize came rushing into Lucien's office. He closed and locked the door. There was a queer expression in his eyes.

"God, how ugly vice is!" thought Lucien.

"My friend, go to your father as quickly as you can," said the Minister in a tremulous voice. "I must speak to him . . . *without fail*. . . . Do everything under heaven to bring him to the Ministry, for after all, I cannot very well be seen at the banking house of MM. Van Peters and Leuwen."

Lucien examined him attentively.

"He has not the least shame in speaking to me of his theft!"

Lucien was wrong. M. de Vaize was simply so consumed with cupidity (it was a matter of realizing a profit of seventeen thousand francs) that he forgot all the trepidation he usually



felt when speaking to Lucien, not for any moral reason, but because he thought him a man of wit like his father, and dreaded some disagreeable sally. The Minister's tone was at the moment that of a master speaking to his valet. In any case, the difference would certainly never occur to him. A Minister, according to him, conferred so great an honor on anyone he spoke to that he could not possibly be impolite. And then, besides, whenever money was involved, excitement prevented him from noticing anything at all.

M. Leuwen laughed when he heard the message his son had been charged with.

"Ah!" he said, "because he is a Minister he thinks he can make me trot? Tell him for me that I am not going to his Ministry and that I urgently advise him not to come to me. Yesterday's transaction is terminated; today I am engaged in others."

As Lucien made haste to leave:

"Don't be in such a hurry," said his father. "Your Minister has a genius for administration, but one should never spoil a great man, otherwise he becomes negligent. . . . You say that he assumes a rude and too familiar a tone with you—*with you* is superfluous. Except when the man is perorating in his drawing room like a Prefect accustomed to being the only one who talks, he is rude to everyone. It is because all his life has been spent studying the great art of handling men and leading them to happiness along the path of virtue."

M. Leuwen glanced at his son to see if he would let this pass. Lucien did not even notice the sarcasm.

"How far he still is from listening to his interlocutor and from knowing how to take advantage of his mistakes!" thought M. Leuwen. "This son of mine is an artist. His art requires an embroidered coat and a carriage, as the art of Ingres and Prudhon call for brushes and an easel."

"Which would you prefer," he asked, "a perfectly polished,

graceful artist with finished manners who painted daubs, or a man who, entirely preoccupied with the essence of things and not their appearance, produced masterpieces? If, after two years as Minister, M. de Vaize can point to twenty Departments where agriculture has advanced one step, thirty others in which public morals have improved, won't you forgive him his somewhat incorrect and rude way of speaking to his first aide-de-camp, a young man he likes and who is, moreover, necessary to him? You must forgive him that ridiculous tone he adopts without knowing it. It is because he was born ridiculous and pompous. What you should do is to remind him of the courtesy due you by a firm manner and a few timely and telling words."

M. Leuwen went on talking for a long time without eliciting any response from Lucien. He did not like this pensive air.

"I saw three or four brokers waiting in the first reception room," Lucien said, getting up to return to the Rue de Grenelle.

"My friend," said his father, "you who have such good eyes, I wish you would read me a little from the *Débats*, the *Quotidienne* and the *National*."

Lucien began reading, and could not help smiling to think of the stock brokers. "Waiting is their job, and mine is reading newspapers aloud!"

M. de Vaize was almost out of his mind when at three o'clock Lucien finally returned. He was in Lucien's office and had, as the office boy said with bated breath and an air of profound respect, been back and forth at least ten times before.

"Well, sir?" said the Minister with haggard eyes.

"Nothing new," replied Lucien with the most perfect calm. "I have just left my father who kept me until now. He will not come, and urgently advises you not to come to him. Yester-

day's transaction is terminated, and he is engaged on others today."

M. de Vaize turned purple and hastily left his secretary's office.

Completely dazzled by his new dignity which he had worshiped in anticipation for the last thirty years, M. de Vaize now perceived for the first time that M. Leuwen was equally proud of the position he had made for himself in the world.

"I see the logic of this young man's insolence," M. de Vaize said to himself as he paced up and down the room. "A Minister is made by royal decree, but a decree cannot make a man like M. Leuwen. That's what comes of the government leaving us in office for only a year or two. Would a banker have refused to come if Colbert had sent for him?"

After this discreet comparison, the angry Minister fell into a profound meditation.

"Couldn't I possibly get along without this insolent individual? But his honesty is famous, almost as famous as his malice. He is a pleasure lover, a *rake*, who for twenty years has been making fun of everything that is most respected: the King, religion . . . He is the Talleyrand of the Bourse. In that world his epigrams are law and, since the July revolt, *that world* is coming nearer every day to the aristocratic world, the only one that should, by rights, have influence. People with money have succeeded to the place and privileges of the great families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. . . . His salon brings together all the cleverest men of the business world. . . . He is on friendly terms with all the diplomats who frequent the Opera. . . . Villèle used to consult him."

At that name, M. de Vaize almost bowed. Although his tone was overbearing, and he sometimes carried assurance to the point where it is known by another name, he was by a strange contradiction subject to fits of unbelievable timidity. For example, it would have been very painful and almost impossible

for him to make overtures to any other banking house. He combined a violent love of money with the fantastic idea that the public looked upon him as spotlessly honest; this came from having been preceded in office by a thief.

After a full hour of pacing the floor and after having very energetically sent to the devil his usher when the latter came to announce the department heads, and even one of the King's aides-de-camp, he felt that the effort of getting another banker was beyond his powers. His Excellency had a holy fear of the newspapers. His vanity having bowed before the epigrammatic indolence of a man of pleasure, he now proceeded to conciliate his vanity.

"After all, I knew him before I was Minister. . . . I am not compromising my dignity by allowing this caustic old man to continue the same tone of equality he was accustomed to use toward me in the past."

M. Leuwen had foreseen this reaction. That evening he said to his son:

"Your Minister has written me a letter full of pinpricks, like a lover to his mistress. I was obliged to reply. What a bore! I am like you, the *yellow metal* does not interest me enough. You really should learn to play the market. Nothing could be simpler for a great mathematician, a former student of the École Polytechnique. There is only one principle involved: the stupidity of the petty speculator is an infinite quantity. My clerk, M. Metral, will give you lessons, not in stupidity but in the art of profiting by it." (Lucien looked severe.) "You will do me a great personal service if you will make yourself competent to act as intermediary between M. de Vaize and me. The natural arrogance of this great administrator has to contend with the natural impassivity of my character. He keeps dancing around me, but since our last operation I refuse to do anything but jest. Yesterday evening his vanity was fairly seething, he tried his best to reduce me to seriousness. It was most

amusing. If he cannot humble you within the next week, he will begin to court you. How will you receive the advances of a Minister and a man of merit? Do you realize, my dear son, the advantages of having a father? In Paris, a very useful article."

"On that score I should have much too much to say, and you are not fond of provincial sentimentality. As to His Excellency, why shouldn't I be as natural with him as I am with everybody else?"

"The expedient of laziness. Shame on you!"

"I mean I shall be distant and respectful, while always showing, even quite plainly, my desire to terminate the interview with so great a personage."

"Would you have the spunk to risk a light and somewhat chaffing remark? He would then say to himself: Worthy son of such a father!"

"Unfortunately the clever rejoinder that occurs to you on the spur of the moment, only enters my head two minutes later."

"Bravo! You always see the useful side of things and, what is worse, the honest side. All that is perfectly ridiculous and out of place in France. Take your Saint-Simonism! There was some good in it, and yet for the first and second floors it remains odious and unintelligible, and even for the third; only in the garret does it meet with some consideration. But the French Church, so eminently reasonable—just look at the fortune it makes! This country will not attain the level of reason before 1900. Until then one should instinctively see the amusing side of things, and only perceive the *useful* and the *honest* by an effort of will. Before your trip to Nancy I should never have thought of going into all these details with you, but now it is a pleasure to talk with you. Have you ever heard of a plant that is said to thrive all the better for being trampled on? I should like to have some of them for you, if they exist. I'd

ask my friend Thouin to send you a large bouquet to serve as a model for your conduct toward M. de Vaize."

"But, my dear father, what about gratitude? . . ."

"But, my dear son, he's a clown! Is it his fault if chance has thrown the gift of administration into his lap? He is not like us. He is not a man who appreciates gracious behavior, a lasting friendship that makes one feel free to indulge in delicate exchanges: he would consider it a weakness. He is like a Prefect, insolent after dinner, but every morning for twenty years shaking in his boots for fear of reading his dismissal in the *Moniteur*; he's another of those heartless and soulless provincial prosecutors, but endowed, on the other hand, with the restless, timid and violent temper of a child. As insolent as a Prefect in high favor every morning, and every evening as nervous as a courtier who finds himself *de trop* in a drawing room. But the scales have not yet fallen from your eyes; believe no one blindly—not even me. In one year you'll see all this for yourself. As for gratitude, I advise you to eliminate the word from your vocabulary. An agreement, a bilateral contract was made between M. de Vaize and myself after your return to Paris (your mother seemed to think she would die if you went to America). He pledged himself: first, to arrange your desertion from your regiment with his colleague in the War Ministry; second, to appoint you Master of Petitions and his private secretary, with the Cross at the end of the year. On my part I have pledged myself and my salon to play up his reputation, his talents, his virtue and especially his honesty. I succeeded in obtaining his appointment to the Ministry as well as his nomination to the Bourse, and I have promised that on the Bourse all operations based on telegraphic dispatches shall be divided equally. Now he insists that I am pledged as well for all operations based on the deliberations of the Council of Ministers, but that is not true. On the Council I have M. N——, Minister of —— who hasn't the faintest notion of administra-

tion but who can *divine* and read faces. N—— can foretell the King's intentions a week in advance, but poor de Vaize can't foresee them even an hour in advance. Already he has been defeated at two Cabinet meetings and he has been Minister barely a month. You must always remember that M. de Vaize cannot get along without my son. If I were to become an imbecile, if I gave up my salon, if I stopped going to the Opera, it might possibly occur to him to make arrangements with some other banking house, but I don't really think he has that much gumption. He may give you the cold shoulder for five or six days, after which there will be an explosion of confidence. That is the moment which causes me some uneasiness. If you give the impression of being overjoyed and grateful like a clerk earning a hundred louis, such worthy sentiments will class you forever among the dupes who can be loaded with work, compromised and humiliated without pity or protest—as the Third Estate was formerly taxed, and for that are only the more grateful.”

“I shall regard the effusions of His Excellency as mere childishness combined with deceit.”

“Will you have sense enough to observe such a program?”

During the days that followed this paternal lesson, the Minister always spoke to Lucien with the absent-minded air of a man overwhelmed by affairs of the greatest importance. Lucien made his replies as brief as possible and paid court to Madame de Vaize.

One morning the Minister arrived in Lucien's office followed by an office boy carrying an enormous portfolio. When the boy had left them, the Minister himself locked the door and, sitting down familiarly beside Lucien, said:

“That poor N——, my predecessor, was no doubt a most honest fellow; but the public holds strange notions about him. They insist that he speculated. Here, for example, is the port-

folio of the Administration of —.\* It is a matter of seven to ten million. Can I very well ask the department head who has had charge of all this for ten years, whether there has been any abuse of power? I can only try to guess; M. Crapart (Chief of Police of the Ministry) does say that the wife of this same department head spends fifteen or twenty thousand francs a year, and her husband's salary is only twelve; they also own two or three little estates about which I am waiting for information. But all that is remote, very vague, not very conclusive. What I need is facts. To pin him down, I asked M. N—— for a general and a thorough report. Here it is with corroborative documents. I want you, my dear fellow, to lock yourself in, compare the documents with the report, and give me your opinion."

Lucien was amazed at the Minister's manner: it was courteous, reasonable and not in the least supercilious. Lucien went to work in earnest. Three hours later he sent the following note to the Minister:

*"This report is not thorough.* It is nothing but words. M. N—— does not frankly admit any fact; I have not found a

\* It has seemed preferable to leave a little obscurity and reserve in the description, than to run the risk of having one of the characters turn this epic into a satire. Imagine any administration—Post Office, Public Works, Foundlings, . . .

The gentlemen recently appointed Ministers are so well known for their intelligence, their probity, and their strength of character, that I have been at no great pains to avoid the reproach of *indulging in personalities*. Nothing easier than to attempt the portrait of these gentlemen, but such a portrait would seem very boring at the end of a year or two when Frenchmen will have agreed on the two or three lines to be accorded each of them by history. Having, through repugnance, avoided personalities, I have tried to strike an average of all the Ministers of the period just past, and this is not the portrait of any one of them; I have been careful to strike out any witticism or personal remark against any of their Excellencies. [STENDHAL]



single statement that does not dodge the issue. M. N—— does not *commit* himself in any way. It is a well written dissertation, abounding in the humanities; it is a newspaper article, without facts or figures—the author seems to have had a falling-out with Barrême!”

A few minutes later the Minister burst into Lucien's office. It was an eruption of affection. Embracing his secretary, he cried:

“How happy I am to have such a captain as you in my regiment!”

Lucien had anticipated great difficulty in being hypocritical. Now he assumed the air of a man anxious for this effusion to come to an end without the least effort, because this second entrance of M. de Vaize made him think of a cheap comedy actor who shamelessly overacts his part. M. de Vaize was almost as lacking in dignity as Colonel Malher, Lucien's martinet superior in Nancy, but his duplicity was more apparent.

Lucien's manner was so icy as he listened to the Minister's praises, and, without knowing it, he too so overacted his part that the disconcerted Minister began abusing the department head, N——. One thing struck Lucien: the Minister had not read N——'s report. “The devil, I'm going to tell him so,” he decided. “What's the harm?”

“Your Excellency is so overwhelmed by important Cabinet discussions and the preparation of the budget of his department that he has naturally not had time to read this report of M. N—— which he so justly censures.”

The Minister could not restrain a movement of violent anger. To attack his aptitude for work, to doubt those fourteen hours which, either by day or night, he said he spent at his desk, was to attack his palladium.

“Egad, sir, you will have to prove that,” he said, flushing hotly. “My turn,” thought Lucien and, with moderation, lucidity and respectful courtesy, proceeded to win the day. He

proved clearly that the Minister had not read the report of the poor man he had so abused. Two or three times M. de Vaize endeavored to end the discussion by confusing the issue.

"You and I, my dear friend, *between us*, have read it all."

"Your Excellency will permit me to remark that if I should read too carelessly or too hastily any document Your Excellency deigns to entrust to me, I who am a mere novice in this career, who have nothing else to do, I should be altogether unworthy of his confidence. There is here in paragraph five . . ."

After bringing the question back to the point three times, Lucien obtained a success which would have been fatal for anyone else in his position. His Excellency left the office in a rage and Lucien could hear him abusing the poor department head whom the usher, hearing the Minister return, had introduced into his office. The Minister's formidable voice penetrated to the reception room and through the hidden door leading into Lucien's office. An old servant who had been placed there by the Minister of the Interior, and whom Lucien suspected of being a spy, hurried into M. de Vaize's office without being summoned.

"Does His Excellency wish anything?"

"Not His Excellency but I, *I* wish to beg you never to come in unless I ring!"

Such was the outcome of Lucien's first battle.

## CHAPTER SIX

ONE THING Lucien had to be thankful for was not to have found his cousin, Ernest Dévelroy, future member of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, in Paris on his return. One of the Moral Academicians who occasionally gave bad dinners and had three votes, besides his own, at his disposal, had been obliged to go to Vichy to drink the waters, and M. Dévelroy had taken upon himself to play the part of nurse. This sacrifice of two or three months had produced the happiest effect in the Moral Academy.

"He is a man one is pleased to sit next to," said M. Bonneau, one of the leaders of that society.

"Ernest's campaign at Vichy," remarked M. Leuwen, "will get him into the Institute four years sooner."

"Wouldn't it be better for you, father, to have a son like that?" said Lucien almost compassionately.

"*Troppo aiuto a sant' Antonio*," M. Leuwen rejoined, "I like you better in spite of your virtue. I am certainly not worried about Ernest's getting ahead; it won't take long before he has positions bringing him thirty thousand francs like the philosopher Victor Cousin. But I should as soon have M. de Talleyrand for a son."

In one of the ministerial departments, there was a certain M. Desbacs whose social position was rather similar to Lucien's. He was wealthy and M. de Vaize called him *my cousin*, but he did not boast an accredited salon, nor a celebrated dinner once a week to give him prestige in the world. He felt this difference keenly and decided to attach himself to Lucien.

M. Desbacs had the same character as Blifil (in *Tom Jones*)

and, unfortunately, this was plainly visible on his extremely pale and pock-marked countenance which had no expression other than that of forced politeness and an amiability reminiscent of Tartuffe. His jet-black hair and his very white face made people stare at him. With this disadvantage, which was by no means negligible, and because he always said the correct thing and never anything out of the way, M. Desbacs had made very rapid progress in the drawing rooms of Paris. He had been dismissed as Sub-Prefect by M. de Martignac who had found him too much of a Jesuit, and he was now one of the brightest clerks in the Ministry of the Interior.

Like all tender souls in despair, Lucien was indifferent to everything. He did not choose his acquaintances but took up with anyone who presented himself: Desbacs presented himself most gracefully.

Lucien did not even notice that Desbacs was trying to ingratiate himself. Seeing that Lucien really wanted to learn and to work, Desbacs offered his services in getting information for him, not only from the various offices of the Ministry of the Interior, but from all the other Ministries of Paris. There is nothing that is more helpful or that so greatly curtails such work.

In return, Desbacs never missed one of the weekly dinners that Madame Leuwen had instituted for any of the clerks of the Ministry of the Interior with whom her son should become friendly.

"You are getting us mixed up with a queer lot," said her husband; "subaltern spies perhaps."

"Or else people of worth not yet recognized," his wife rejoined. "Béranger was once a clerk at eighteen hundred francs. But at all events, it is only too evident from Lucien's behavior that men bore and irritate him. This is the sort of misanthropy that is the least easily forgiven."

"And you want to silence his colleagues of the Interior. But at least try to keep them from coming to our Tuesdays."

M. Leuwen's chief aim at present was to prevent his son from having even a quarter of an hour of solitude. And he felt that Lucien's one hour at the theater every night was not sufficient.

One evening he ran into his son in the foyer of the Bouffes.

"How would you like me to take you to Madame Grandet's later?" he proposed. "She is dazzling tonight and certainly the prettiest woman in the audience. But I don't want to sell you a pig in a poke. I'll first take you to Duvernoy's box next to Madame Grandet's."

"I should be so happy not to talk to anyone but you tonight!"

"Your face must be known to people as long as I have a salon."

M. Leuwen had already tried several times to take Lucien to a dozen houses of the *Juste-milieu*, altogether suitable for the private secretary of the Minister of the Interior. Lucien had always found some excuse for not going.

"I am too stupid. Let me first cure myself of absent-mindedness. I should only commit some blunder that would cling to my name and discredit me forever. . . . The first impression is all-important."

But since a soul in despair is without resistance, that evening he let himself be dragged to the box of M. Duvernoy, Collector General, and then, an hour later, to the salon of M. Grandet, a retired manufacturer, formidably rich and furiously *Juste-milieu*. His house seemed to Lucien charming, the drawing room magnificent, but M. Grandet himself too preposterously absurd.

"He is a Guizot minus the intelligence," Lucien decided, "and with no aversion to blood—an infraction of our contract, my dear father!"

At the dinner which followed Lucien's presentation, M.

Grandet, in the presence of at least thirty persons, had loudly expressed the hope that M. N—— of the opposition would die of the wound he had received in a notorious duel.

The famous beauty of Madame Grandet could not compensate for the disgust inspired by her husband. She was a young woman of about twenty-three or -four, and more regular features could not be imagined. Hers was a delicate and flawless beauty, a face carved in ivory, one might have thought. She sang very well, having studied with Rubini. Her gift for painting in water colors was famous, and her husband sometimes paid her the compliment of stealing one of her pictures and sending it to be sold; it brought three hundred francs.

But not satisfied with the distinction of being an excellent water colorist, she was an irrepressible talker. Woe to the conversation if anyone happened to mention the fatal words: happiness, religion, civilization, legitimate power, marriage . . .

"I believe, God forgive me, that she is trying to ape Madame de Staël," thought Lucien after one of these disquisitions. "She can never let anything pass without giving her opinion. It is generally right, but platitudinous to a deadly degree, although invariably delicately and nobly expressed. I am willing to wager that she gets her provision of wit out of the three franc manuals."

In spite of his complete distaste for the classical beauty and imitative attractions of Madame Grandet, Lucien was faithful to his promise and twice a week appeared in the most agreeable salon of the *Juste-milieu*.

One evening when Lucien came home at midnight and said, in reply to his mother's inquiry, that he had been at the Grandets', his father asked:

"And what did you do to shine above all others in Madame Grandet's eyes?"

"I imitated the talent that makes her so seductive: I painted a water color."

"And what subject did your gallantry select?" asked Madame Leuwen.

"A Spanish monk mounted on a donkey whom Rodil is having hanged."

"How horrible!" Madame Leuwen exclaimed. "You will give yourself a terrible reputation in that house. And it isn't even true. You will have all the inconveniences without the advantages. My son, an executioner!"

"Your son, a hero!" replied Lucien. "That is what Madame Grandet will see in punishments ruthlessly meted out to those who do not think as she does. A young woman with any delicacy or intelligence, who saw things as they are, in short, someone lucky enough to be a little like you, would think me a very wicked person, a ministerial fanatic who wants to be a Prefect and is anxious for another *Rue Transnonain*. But all Madame Grandet is looking for is geniuses, a *grande passion* and master-minds. For a poor little woman endowed simply with common sense, and that of the commonest kind, a monk sent to his death in a superstitious country and by a *Juste-milieu* general, is sublime. My water color is a Michael Angelo."

"So you're assuming the dismal character of a Don Juan?" Madame Leuwen said with a deep sigh.

M. Leuwen burst out laughing.

"Ah! That is really good. Lucien a Don Juan! But, my angel, you must love him to distraction: you are raving. I congratulate you. Happy those who rave because of some passion. A thousand times happy those who rave out of love in an age when no one raves except out of mental impotence and mediocrity! Poor Lucien will always be the dupe of the women he loves. I see in that heart the makings of a dupe up to the age of fifty . . ."

"At least," Madame Leuwen said, turning to Lucien with a smile of contentment, "you saw that the horrible and the banal

were, for that poor little Madame Grandet, the sublime of a Michael Angelo."

"I'll bet you never had any such ideas when you were painting your monk."

"True. I was thinking of M. Grandet who, this evening, merely wanted to hang all the journalists of the opposition. At first my monk on the donkey resembled M. Grandet."

"Have you guessed yet who the lady's lover is?"

"She has such a callous heart I thought she must be virtuous."

"But without a lover her household arrangements would not be complete. The choice has fallen on M. Crapart."

"What! My Ministry's Chief of Police?"

"The same, and the person who can spy on your mistress at the expense of the State."

At these words Lucien grew suddenly very silent; his mother guessed the reason.

"You are looking pale, my dear. Take your candle, and for pity's sake, do try to get to bed before one o'clock."

"If I had had M. Crapart in Nancy," Lucien said to himself, "I should have known without being a witness, what was happening to Madame de Chasteller. And what would have happened if I had known a month earlier? I should simply have lost the best days of my life that much sooner. I should have been condemned one month sooner to live all morning with a rascally Excellency, and all evening with a little baggage who is the most sought-after woman of Paris."

It can be seen from the exaggerated bitterness of his judgments how much Lucien was still suffering. Nothing makes people so spiteful as unhappiness. Look at prudes!



## CHAPTER SEVEN

COMING BACK from the Tuileries one evening at five o'clock, Lucien was summoned to the Minister's office. Our hero found him looking as pale as death.

"A terrible business, my dear Leuwen! Here is a mission of the utmost delicacy for you . . ."

Unconsciously Lucien assumed a haughty air of refusal, and the Minister hastened to add:

". . . and highly honorable."

These words failed to soften Lucien's cold disdainful attitude. He did not have a very high opinion of the honor that can be acquired on a salary of nine hundred francs.

His Excellency continued:

"You know that we have the good fortune to live under the protection of five police forces . . . but you know it only as the public knows it and not as you should in order to act effectively. Pray forget all that you think you know on the subject. To get people to read their papers, the opposition poisons everything. Be careful not to confuse what the public believes to be true and what I shall tell you, otherwise you will certainly do the wrong thing. Above all, my dear Leuwen, never forget that even the lowest rascal has vanity and a sense of honor of his own. If he suspects contempt on your part, he becomes intractable. . . . Forgive me all these details, my friend, but I am so anxious for you to succeed . . ."

"Ah!" Lucien said to himself, "I too have my vanity like the lowest rascal. Those two sentences were suspiciously close together. . . . He must really be upset."

The Minister no longer thought of trying to cajole Lucien;

he was too completely absorbed by his anguish. His haggard eyes stood out in relief against the deathly pallor of his face; everything about him betrayed his distress.

"That devil of a General Rumigny," he went on, "thinks of nothing but being made a Lieutenant General. He is, as you know, Chief of Police of the Château. And that's not all: he wants to be Minister of War to show how clever he is in a difficult post. As a matter of fact," the great administrator added with scorn, "the only difficult thing connected with that poor Ministry is to keep soldiers and civilians from getting too friendly, and at the same time to limit the number of fatal duels between them to not more than six a month."

Lucien looked at him narrowly.

"For the whole of France," the Minister continued, "that is the rate fixed upon by the Council of Ministers. Until now, General Rumigny has been satisfied to spread rumors in the soldiers' barracks of assaults by working men on isolated soldiers. But *sweet equality* still keeps bringing the two classes together; they respect each other; and to excite their hostility takes the constant vigilance of the military police. General Rumigny is always plaguing me to have exact accounts inserted in *my papers* of all the fights in all the taverns, all the brutalities of the guard, and all the drunken brawls which are reported to him by his spies disguised as sergeants. Those gentlemen are supposed merely to observe the drunkenness of others without ever being tempted themselves. Such accounts are the despair of our writers. How, they say, can you expect a distinctive phrase or a subtle touch of irony to be effective after such vulgarity? What does polite society care about tavern victories, endlessly repeated? The revelation of such villainies simply makes the reader with the slightest literary taste fling down his newspaper and give vent to some scornful sarcasm on the subject of salaried writers. And you can't very well blame him.

"You must admit," continued the Minister with a laugh, "that no matter how cleverly these literary gentlemen present them, the public no longer bother to read their endless stories of those strange quarrels in which two masons would have assassinated three grenadiers (armed with their sabers) if it hadn't been for the miraculous intervention from the nearby guardhouse. Even the soldiers make fun of this section of our papers, which we are at such pains to have distributed in their barracks. And with things in this state, that devil Rumigny, dissatisfied with the two stars on his epaulets, decides to get at the facts. Now, my dear friend," the Minister added, lowering his voice, "you must know that the Kortis affair, so emphatically denied in our papers yesterday morning, is only too true. Kortis, one of General Rumigny's most trusted agents, who gets three hundred francs a month, last Wednesday tried to disarm a stupid-looking young soldier he had had his eye on for the last week. At midnight this soldier was stationed on guard duty right in the middle of the Austerlitz Bridge. Kortis comes along pretending to be drunk. Then, suddenly, he flings himself at the soldier and tries to pull away his gun. But the confounded soldier, who looks like such a simpleton, and chosen for that very reason, backs away a couple of steps and lodges a bullet in Kortis' belly. The soldier happens to be a hunter from the Dauphiné mountains. So there is our Kortis mortally wounded, but not dead—and that's the devil of it!

"Such is the situation. Now, since Kortis knows that he hasn't more than three or four days to live, the problem is, how can we make sure he won't talk?

"A certain person (*id est* the King) was furious with General Rumigny and made a terrible scene. Unfortunately I happened to be present and the *certain person* insisted that I was the only one who had the necessary tact to bring the affair to a happy conclusion. If I were less well known, I would go myself to see Kortis—he is in the — Hospital—and study

everyone who comes near him. But my presence would be enough to make the affair a hundred times worse.

"General Rumigny pays the men of his police more than I pay mine. It's only natural: the blackguards they have to deal with are more dangerous than the ruffians who are the ordinary fare of the police of the Ministry of the Interior. Not a month ago General Rumigny stole two of my men. With us they were paid a hundred francs, with an occasional five francs, here and there, when they happened to bring in good reports. Now they get two hundred and fifty francs a month. But I didn't dare do more than refer jokingly to his absurd recruiting practices. He must be furious about the scene this morning, and the praises of which I was the recipient, made in his presence and almost at his expense. A clever man like you can guess the rest: if my agents accomplish anything worthwhile at Kortis' bedside, they'll take good care to put their report on my desk five minutes *after* they see me leave the Ministry, and General Rumigny will already have questioned them an hour before at his leisure.

"Now, my dear Leuwen, will you get me out of a serious predicament?"

After a little silence, Lucien replied:

"Very well, sir."

But the expression of his face was infinitely less reassuring. He continued icily:

"I am not to approach the surgeon, I suppose?"

"Splendid, my friend, splendid; you have grasped the crux of the matter," the Minister hastened to reply. "General Rumigny has already done enough and more than enough. This surgeon is a sort of giant named Monod, who reads nothing but the *Courrier Français* at the café near the hospital and who, at the third mention of a Cross by Rumigny's confidential agent, answered his offer with a punch in the jaw which

considerably cooled the man's ardor and, in addition, caused a scandal in the hospital.

"'There's a cool customer for you,' Monod cried, 'he merely proposes poisoning the wounded man in 13 with opium!'"

The Minister, whose tone until now had been energetic, terse and sincere, thought it incumbent on him to add two or three eloquent remarks in the style of the *Journal de Paris*, to the effect that he himself would never have dreamed of approaching the surgeon.

The Minister ceased speaking. Lucien was violently upset. After an alarming silence, he finally said to the Minister:

"I do not want to be a perfectly useless person. If I have His Excellency's consent to my treating Kortis as tenderly as would his own family, I accept the mission."

"You insult me by such a condition," the Minister cried with an air of affectionate reproach. And it was perfectly true that the idea of poisoning or even of opium was horrible to him.

When the question of opium to relieve poor Kortis' suffering was brought up at the Cabinet meeting, he had turned pale.

"We should remember," he had insisted, "all the criticism against General Bonaparte for the use of opium before the walls of Jaffa. We must not expose ourselves to the calumnies of the republican press for the rest of our lives, and what is worse still, of the legitimist papers which get into the salons. . . ."

This sincere and virtuous recoil of the Minister slightly calmed Lucien's horrible anguish. He said to himself:

"This is much worse than anything I could have met with in the regiment. There it was a question, as at —, of slashing or even shooting a poor misguided, or even innocent, workman; here I find myself mixed up in a frightful story

of poisoning. What difference does the kind of danger matter so long as I show courage?"

Finally, in a firm tone, he said:

"I will second you, Monsieur le Comte. It may be that for the rest of my life I shall regret not having fallen ill on the instant and gone to bed for a week. In that case on coming back to the Ministry, if I found you too greatly changed, I could have handed in my resignation. His Excellency is too fair a man (*too involved with my father* is what he thought) to persecute me with the long arm of his power, but I am tired of recoiling in the face of danger." (This was said with restrained warmth.) "Since life in the Nineteenth Century, under any circumstances, is so painful, I shall not bother changing my calling for the third time. To what calumny I am exposing my whole future life I am perfectly well aware. I know how M. Caulaincourt died. I shall therefore act with the prospect in view of having later to justify my conduct in a printed statement. Perhaps it would have been better, even for you, Monsieur le Comte, to have left these measures to an agent protected by epaulets: Frenchmen will forgive a uniform almost anything . . ."

The Minister seemed about to protest, and Lucien added:

"I don't mean to give you unsolicited advice, sir,—moreover, a trifle late—and even less to insult you. As I hated to ask you for an hour to think it over, I have simply been thinking out loud."

This was said in so natural yet, at the same time, in so manly a tone that the Minister revised his whole opinion of Lucien's character.

"He is a man!" he thought, "and a man of decision. So much the better! It will help make up for his father's appalling indolence. Our telegraphic transactions are safely buried forever, and I can, with a clear conscience, silence the son with a Pre-

fecture. It will be a way of paying my debt to the father (unless he dies of indigestion first) and of *binding* his salon to me."

These reflections were made in less time than it takes to read them.

The Minister tried to assume as manly and magnanimous a tone as he could. The day before he had seen Corneille's tragedy, *Horace*, very well acted.

"I must remember," he thought, "the intonations of Horace and Curiace talking together after Flavian has announced their future combat."

Whereupon the Minister, taking advantage of his position, began pacing up and down his office reciting:

"By Albe, now appointed, I no longer know you."

"But *I* know you still, and that is what kills me. . . ."

Lucien had made up his mind.

"Any delay," he said to himself, "is a proof of uncertainty; and any show of cowardice might win me another enemy tongue."

As he made this grim observation, he turned toward the Minister:

"I am ready, sir. Has the Ministry of the Interior made any move in this affair yet?"

"To tell the truth, I don't know."

"Then I'll just find out how matters stand, and be back directly."

Lucien hurried to M. Desbacs' office and, without betraying his real object, sent him to the different departments for information. In a very short time he was back in the Minister's office.

"Here is a letter," said the Minister, "that will place everyone in the hospital at your disposal, and here is money."

Lucien went over to the table to write out a receipt.

"What are you doing, my dear fellow? A receipt between us?" the Minister exclaimed with forced lightness.

"Everything we do here may one day be printed, sir," Lucien answered with all the solemnity of a man defending his head from the scaffold.

Seeing Lucien's expression, all His Excellency's nonchalance vanished.

"Do you think you are going to find a representative of the *National* or the *Tribune* at Kortis' bedside? Mind you—no imprudence, no duels with these gentlemen! You must certainly feel what an immense advantage that would give them, and how General Rumigny would gloat over my poor Ministry."

"I promise you there will be no duels, at least as long as Kortis still lives."

"This business takes precedence for the day. As soon as you have done everything possible, you must find me no matter where I happen to be. This is my itinerary: in one hour I shall go to the Ministry of Finance, from there to —, then to —. You will greatly oblige me by keeping me posted on every move you make."

"Has His Excellency acquainted me with everything he has done?" Lucien asked pointedly.

"On my honor," the Minister assured him, "I have not said a word to Crapart. As far as I am concerned, I turn over to you a perfectly virginal affair."

"Your Excellency will permit me to say, with all due respect, that in case I see anyone connected with the police, I withdraw. Such company is not to my taste."

"None of my police, my dear aide-de-camp. But you can't hold me responsible for the stupidities of the other Ministries! I have no wish to keep anything from you, nor could I. But who can guarantee that right after my departure *a certain person* did not give the same commission to another Ministry?"



The anxiety at the Château is intense. The article in the *National* is atrocious in its moderation; there is a subtlety, an arrogance in its scorn. . . . It will be read from beginning to end in the salons. Much worse than the *Tribune*. Ah! Why did Guizot fail to make M. Carrel a Councilor of State!"

"Carrel would have refused a thousand times, it seems to me. It is better to be candidate for the Presidency of the Republic than Councilor of State. A Councilor of State receives twelve thousand francs while Carrel gets thirty-six for saying what he thinks. Besides, his name is on every tongue. But even if I find *him* at Kortis' bedside there will be no duel."

This truly youthful digression, spoken with great warmth, did not appear to please His Excellency inordinately.

"Good-by, my dear boy! Good-by and good luck! You have unlimited credit, and be sure to keep me informed. If I am not here please be so good as to look for me."

Lucien returned to his office with all the resolution of a man marching to the assault of a battery. There was one little difference, however: instead of thinking of glory, he looked forward to nothing but infamy.

He found Desbacs in his office.

"Kortis' wife has written," he informed Lucien. "Here is the letter." Lucien took it and read:

"My poor husband is not being looked after in the hospital as he ought to be, and how can I lavish on him all the tender care I owe him unless someone takes my place here to care for his poor, orphaned little ones? . . . Death has stricken my husband on the very steps of the throne and of the altar. . . . All I ask of Your Excellency is justice. . . ."

"Excellency be damned!" thought Lucien. "But I can't very well say this letter is addressed to me."

"What time is it?" he asked Desbacs. He wanted to have an irrefutable witness.

"Quarter-to-six. There's not a soul left in the place."

Lucien noted the hour on a piece of paper. He called the office boy, who was a spy:

"If anyone enquires for me this evening, kindly say that I left at six o'clock."

Lucien noticed that Desbacs, usually so discreet, was burning with curiosity and a desire to put in his oar.

"Ah, my friend," thought Lucien, "you may very well be a thorough rogue, or even one of General Rumigny's spies."

"You see," he went on indifferently, "I have promised to go to dine in the country. They will think that I am playing the nobleman, and willfully keeping them waiting."

He looked straight into Desbacs' eyes, which instantly lost their fire.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

LUCIEN flew to the hospital. He asked the porter to take him to the surgeon on duty. Crossing the courtyard he met two doctors and, giving them his name and titles, asked them to accompany him. He made his request with so much graciousness that it never occurred to these gentlemen to refuse.

"Good," thought Lucien. "I have not been alone with anyone for an instant; that's the great point."

"What time is it, if you please?" he asked the porter who was walking in front of them.

"Half-past-six."

"So, it only took me eighteen minutes to come from the Ministry to the hospital, and I can prove it."

When he reached the surgeon on call, he gave him the Minister's letter.

"Gentlemen," he said to the three doctors present, "asper-sions have been cast on the Minister of the Interior in regard to one of your patients, a wounded man named Kortis who belongs, it is said, to the republican party. . . . The word *opium* has been pronounced. For the sake of your hospital's reputation and, as employees of the government, everything that happens at the bedside of the wounded man, Kortis, must be given the greatest publicity. They may possibly send agents. Don't you think, gentlemen, that it would be well to call the head physician and the head surgeon?"

Two internes were sent to fetch those gentlemen.

"Would it not be advisable to assign two male nurses at once to remain on duty at Kortis' bedside, sensible men, incapable of lying?"

These last words were understood by the oldest doctor present in the sense that used to be given to them four years earlier. He designated two male nurses who had formerly belonged to the Congr gation and who were thorough scamps. One of the doctors went off to install them without delay.

Physicians and surgeons quickly thronged into the staff house. Profound silence reigned; everyone looked mournful. As soon as Lucien saw that there were seven doctors assembled, he addressed them:

"In the name of His Excellency, the Minister of the Interior, whose order I have here in my pocket, I propose that Kortis be treated as though he belonged to the wealthiest class. I believe that this arrangement will prove satisfactory to everyone."

There was a general, if somewhat suspicious, assent.

"Don't you think, gentlemen, that it would be a good thing for *all of us together* to go to see Kortis and afterwards to have a consultation? I am going to have a written report of all that is said drawn up for His Excellency, the Minister of the Interior."

Lucien's determined manner overawed the worthy doctors

who had been counting on spending their evening in a rather more amusing fashion, or at least more profitably.

"But I examined Kortis this morning," one of them, with a dried-up avaricious little face, protested. "He's a dead man. What's the use of a consultation?"

"I shall have your observation placed at the head of the report, sir."

"But I didn't say that with the intention of having it broadcast."

"*Broadcast*, sir; you forget yourself! I beg to assure you on my word of honor, that everything that is said here will be faithfully set down in the report, your remark, sir, as well as my reply."

The lines of Lucien's role were not too bad, but he flushed hotly as he said them, and that threatened to aggravate matters.

"All of us certainly desire only the recovery of the wounded man," hastily intervened the eldest doctor, to put an end to the quarrel. He opened the door and, as they started through the hospital courtyards, was careful to keep the captious doctor separated from Lucien. Three or four other persons joined the procession. Finally, as they were about to open the door into the ward where Kortis was, the head surgeon arrived. He and Lucien went into the porter's room next door.

Lucien took the head surgeon over to the lighted lamp, showed him the Minister's letter, and in two or three words told him what had been done since his arrival at the hospital. This head surgeon was a very honest man and, in spite of his rather pompous bourgeois manner, was not lacking in tact. He sensed the importance of the affair.

"Let us do nothing without Dr. Monod," he said to Lucien. "He lives only a step away from the hospital."

"Ah!" thought Lucien. "That is the surgeon who combated the suggestion of opium with his fists."

In a few moments Dr. Monod arrived, grumbling; they had interrupted his dinner, and besides, he was a bit uneasy about the consequences of the blow he had administered that morning. As soon as he learned how matters stood, he said to Lucien and the head surgeon:

"Well, gentlemen, the man's as good as dead, that's clear. It is a miracle he's still alive, with a bullet in his belly, and not only the bullet, but bits of cloth, the gun wad, and I don't know what else! You can understand why I didn't probe for the bullet in a wound like that. The skin was burned by the shirt that had caught fire."

As he was talking, they reached Kortis' bed. Lucien thought the wounded man had a resolute and not too knavish look, less knavish than Desbacs.

"Sir," began Lucien, "this letter has come from Madame Kortis. . . ."

"Madame! Madame!" cried Kortis. "A funny kind of a Madame who will be begging her bread in a few days. . . ."

"For the Minister, no matter what party you belong to, sir, *res sacra miser*, you are simply a suffering human being. I am told that you have been in the service. . . . I am Second-Lieutenant in the Twenty-seventh Lancers. As a comrade-in-arms, allow me to offer you some slight temporary assistance. . . ."

And he placed two napoleons in the hand the sick man had taken out from under the covers, and held out to him. The hand was burning hot to the touch. Lucien felt sick at the contact.

"That's what I call talking," said the wounded man. "This morning a gentleman came and mouthed something about the hope of a pension. . . . It's easy to promise . . . but no cash in hand. With you, Lieutenant, it's different, *to you I'll talk*. . . ."

Lucien hastened to interrupt the sick man, and turning to-

ward the physicians and surgeons present, seven in all, he said to the head surgeon:

"I think, sir, that the chairmanship of this consultation belongs to you."

"I suppose so," the head surgeon rejoined, "if these gentlemen have no objection. . . ."

"In that case, as it is my duty to ask one of these gentlemen to draw up a detailed report of everything we do, will you kindly indicate the one who will be good enough to write the report. . . ."

But, the doctors having begun talking among themselves in terms not altogether flattering to the government, Lucien added with the greatest possible suavity:

"It would, I think, be preferable for each of us to speak in turn."

This courteous firmness on Lucien's part had a salutary effect. The wounded man was examined and questioned in an orderly manner. Dr. Monod, the surgeon of the ward and of bed number 13, made a concise report. After that they left the wounded man's bedside and, in a private room, held a consultation which Dr. Monod took down in writing. A young doctor, well known in the medical world, wrote out the minutes of the meeting, dictated by Lucien. Of the seven physicians and surgeons, five agreed that death might occur at any moment but certainly within two or three days. One of the seven proposed opium.

"Ah!" Lucien thought. "So here's the scamp bought over by General Rumigny."

He was an extremely elegant gentleman with beautiful blond hair, and wore two enormous ribbons in his buttonhole.

Lucien read his own thought in the eyes of several of the others. The proposition was quickly dismissed:

"The man is not suffering excessive pain," said the old doctor.

Another proposed an abundant bleeding of the foot to prevent an internal hemorrhage. Lucien could see nothing of a political nature in such a measure, until Dr. Monod remarked gruffly, and with a significant air:

"Bleeding would have only one effect, that's certain: it would remove the wounded man's power of speech."

"I violently object to that," said the surgeon who was an honest man.

"So do I."

"And I."

"And I."

"That seems to make a majority," said Lucien with all too evident excitement.

"I ought to remain impassive," he thought. "But how can I contain myself?"

The consultation and the minutes were signed at quarter-past-ten. All the doctors and surgeons, saying they had patients to visit, left as soon as they had finished signing. Lucien remained alone with the giant Monod.

"I am going back to see the wounded man," Lucien said.

"And I am going back to my dinner. You will find him dead perhaps: he might go off like a sick chicken."

Lucien returned to the ward. He was shocked by the odor and the darkness. Now and then feeble groans assailed his ears. Our hero had never seen anything like it. Death had certainly always seemed to him terrible, but clean and mannerly. He invariably imagined himself dying on the grass with his back against a tree, like Bayard. In all his duels that is how he had envisaged death.

He looked at his watch.

"In another hour I'll be at the Opera. . . . But never, as long as I live, shall I forget this evening. . . . Let's get it over!" And he drew near the sick man's bed.

The two nurses were lolling on their chairs, their feet

stretched out on the night-stool. They were half asleep, and seemed to be half drunk as well.

Lucien went around to the other side of the bed. The wounded man's eyes were wide open.

"The principal organs of the body are not affected," Lucien began, "or you would have died the first night. You are much less dangerously wounded than you think."

"Bah!" said the man impatiently, as though the idea of hope was absurd.

"My dear comrade-in-arms, either you will die or you will live," Lucien went on in a manly, resolute and almost affectionate tone. He found this wounded man less disgusting than the handsome gentleman with his two ribbons. "You will live or you will die."

"There's no *or* about it, Lieutenant. I'm done for."

"In any case, please look upon me as your Minister of Finance."

"What? Will the Minister of Finance give me a pension? When I say *me* . . . I mean my poor wife!"

"Yes, my friend, *if you don't blab*."

The eyes of the dying man lighted up and he looked at Lucien with a strange expression.

"Do you understand me, comrade?"

"Yes, but on condition that I am not poisoned. . . . I'm going to croak, I'm done for. . . . All the same I have a notion that they give me . . ."

"You're mistaken. But if you feel that way, don't eat anything that is furnished by the hospital. You have money. . . ."

"The minute I am asleep those damn buggers will steal it."

"Would you like me to send your wife to you, comrade?"

"Damn it all, Lieutenant, you're all right. I'll give my two napoleons to my wife."

"Just don't swallow a thing your wife doesn't give you her-



self. Now that's talking, isn't it? Besides, I give you my word of honor that there is nothing to worry about. . . ."

"Will you bring your car a little closer, Lieutenant? Not wishing to give you orders! . . . but hell! my belly kills me every time I move!"

"You can count on me," Lucien said, bending over the bed.

"What is your name?"

"Lucien Leuwen, Second-Lieutenant of the Twenty-seventh Lancers."

"Why aren't you in uniform?"

"I am on leave in Paris, detailed to the service of the Minister of the Interior."

"Where do you live? Excuse me . . . but you see . . ."

"13 Rue de Londres."

"Ah! you're the son of the rich banking house of Van Peters and Leuwen?"

"Precisely."

After a little silence:

"All right, I believe you. This morning I fainted while they were dressing my wound, but I heard somebody asking that big hulk of a surgeon to give me *opium*. The surgeon started cursing, and then they went away. I opened my eyes but everything was blurred, loss of blood I guess. . . . But the point is, did the surgeon fall for the proposition or didn't he? That's what I'd like to know!"

"Are you really sure?" said Lucien, very much embarrassed. "I didn't think the republican party was as vigilant as all that."

The sick man looked at him.

"Saving your grace, Lieutenant, you know as well as I do where it comes from."

"I detest such horrors, I abhor and despise the men who may have thought of them," Lucien cried, almost forgetting his role. "You can count on me! Haven't I brought you seven

doctors in consultation? Do you think so many would dare condone any unethical practice? You have money; send for your wife or a relative, drink nothing that has not been brought in by your wife. . . .”

Lucien was very much wrought up; the sick man watched him fixedly. His head remained motionless, but his eyes followed Lucien's slightest movement.

“Hell,” he said. “I was 3rd line corporal at Montmirail; I know a bloke's got to croak sometime, but no one likes to be poisoned. . . . I'm not ashamed . . . and,” he added, his expression changing, “shame's something you can't afford *in my job*. If he had any guts, after what he's had me do for him, and dozens of times, General Rumigny would be here in your place. Are you his aide-de-camp?”

“I have never seen him in my life.”

“The name of his aide-de-camp is Saint-Vincent, not Leuwen,” the sick man said as if to himself. . . . “There's something I'd like even better than money.”

“What is that?”

“Well, if it wouldn't be making too bold—I won't let them dress my wound except in your presence. . . . The son of M. Leuwen, the rich banker who keeps Mademoiselle Des Brins of the Opera . . . For it's simple, Lieutenant, when they see I won't drink their opium . . . while they're dressing my wound, zip! . . . a little stroke of the lancet in the belly is soon done. Oh! it hurts, it hurts! . . . It can't last much longer. . . . Will you give the order tomorrow, because you seem to be in command around here. . . . And why? You're not even in uniform! . . . Having it dressed before your eyes, at least . . . And that big, husky surgeon, did he say yes or no? That's the thing.”

His mind was growing confused.

“You mustn't blab,” said Lucien, “and I will take you under my protection. I am going to send your wife to you.”

"You're a good sort. . . . The rich banker Leuwen with Mademoiselle Des Brins, that doesn't cheat. . . . But what about General Rumigny?"

"Of course I don't cheat. And, incidentally, never mention General Rumigny to me or to anyone else, and here are your ten napoleons."

"Count them out in my hand, will you? It hurts my belly too much if I lift my head."

Lucien counted out the napoleons in a low voice, pressing each one down on the man's palm so that he could feel them.

"Mum's the word," said the wounded man.

"Mum's the word all right. If you talk they will steal your napoleons. Talk only to me and only when we are by ourselves. I shall come to see you every day until you are better."

He stayed on a few moments longer with the sick man whose mind was beginning to wander. Then he hastened to the Rue de Braque where Madame Kortis lived. He found her surrounded by the goodwives of the neighborhood, whom he had some difficulty getting rid of.

The woman began to weep, insisted on showing Lucien her children who were peacefully sleeping.

"She is half sincere, half acting a part," Lucien thought. "I'll have to let her talk herself out."

After twenty minutes of a rambling monologue full of endless oratorical circumlocutions—for the poor people of Paris have one thing in common with the gentry, a holy horror of presenting an idea straight—Madame Kortis spoke of opium.

"Yes," Lucien answered carelessly, "it has been rumored that the republicans tried to give your husband opium. But the King's government keeps watch over all its citizens. No sooner had I received your letter than I brought seven doctors to your husband's bedside. And here is their consultation." Lucien handed the paper to Madame Kortis.

He noticed that she was hardly able to read.

"Who would dare to give your husband opium after that? Yet your husband still can't get the idea out of his head, and that will have a bad effect on his condition. . . ."

"He's as good as done for," said the woman coolly.

"No, Madam, since gangrene did not set in within twenty-four hours, there is still hope. General Michaud had exactly the same wound. However, it is better not to mention opium. It will only make for more political bitterness. Kortis must not blab. Therefore, Madam, you must get some woman to look after your children. You can offer her forty sous a day—here is a week in advance. In that way you will be able to stay with your husband in the hospital."

At this all Madame Kortis' eloquence seemed to desert her, and her pathetic expression vanished. Lucien continued:

"Your husband must drink nothing, must eat nothing that you have not prepared with your own hands. . . ."

"Oh, but it's such a disgusting place, a hospital, sir. . . . Besides, my poor babes, my little orphans, without their mother's watchful eye, how do you think they're going to be looked after?"

"As you like, Madam. You are a very good mother! . . . What worries me is that someone may steal his money. . . ."

"Whose money?"

"Your husband's."

"Not likely! I took the twenty-two francs and seven sous he had on him. I filled his snuff box, the poor man, and I gave the nurse ten sous. . . ."

"Well done! Nothing could have been wiser. . . . But, with the understanding that he won't talk politics, that he won't mention opium, and that you won't either, I gave M. Kortis twelve napoleons. . . ."

"Gold napoleons?" Madame Kortis interrupted sharply.

"Yes, Madam, two hundred and forty francs," Lucien answered with a great show of indifference.

"And he isn't to blab?"

"If I am satisfied with him and with you, I will give you a napoleon a day."

"That's twenty francs?" said Madame Kortis, her eyes popping out of her head.

"Yes, twenty francs if you don't mention opium. As a matter of fact, I, myself, was given opium for a wound, and no one wanted to kill me. All these ideas are nonsense. However, if you talk, or if it appears in any paper that Kortis was in fear of opium, or that he spoke of being shot and of his quarrel with the soldier on the Austerlitz Bridge, no more twenty francs; in other words, *if neither of you blabs*, twenty francs a day."

"Starting when?"

"Tomorrow."

"You're such a kind gentleman, couldn't you start tonight, and before midnight? Then I'll go to the hospital. The poor dear man, there's no one can keep him from blabbing but me. . . . Madame Morin! Madame Morin!"

Madame Morin was the neighbor who would look after the children while their mother was away. Lucien gave her fourteen francs for a week, and forty sous to Madame Kortis for a cab to take her to the hospital.

## CHAPTER NINE

**A**T LAST, as the clock of Saint-Gervais was striking the quarter before midnight, Lucien got back to his office. Suddenly he realized that he was dying of hunger. He had not dined and had talked almost without stopping.

"But first I must find my Minister."

He was not at the Ministry. Lucien left a note, changed horse and driver of his cabriolet, and drove off to the Ministry of Finance. M. de Vaize had left some time ago.

"That's enough zeal for the moment," he said to himself, and stopped at a café to have dinner. A few moments later he got into his carriage again and did two unnecessary errands in the Chaussée d'Antin. As he was passing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it occurred to him to try there. The porter replied that the Minister of the Interior was with His Excellency.

Unwilling to interrupt the conference of the two Ministers, the footman refused to announce him. But as Lucien knew of a secret entrance, he was afraid that his Minister might escape him. He was tired of running around and had no desire to return to the Rue de Grenelle. He became insistent and the footman continued haughtily to refuse. Finally Lucien lost his temper.

"Damn it, sir, let me repeat, I am here at the express order of His Excellency, the Minister of the Interior. I insist on entering. Call the guard if you like, but I will enter by force if necessary. I have the honor of repeating that I am M. Leuwen, Master of Petitions. . . ."

Several servants had appeared in haste, and stood in a group at the drawing room door. Lucien saw that he would have to fight all these scoundrels; he was in a very tight place and very angry. He thought of taking hold of the bell-rope and pulling it hard enough to rip it out of the wall.

A sudden obsequiousness in the lackeys' manner made him aware of the entrance of the Comte de Beausobre, Minister of Foreign Affairs, into the drawing room.

"M. le Comte, my name is Lucien Leuwen, Master of Petitions. I have a thousand excuses to offer Your Excellency. But I have been looking for M. le Comte de Vaize for the last two hours on his express order. I must speak to him about an affair that is both important and urgent."

"What . . . *urgent* . . . affair?" said the Minister with unparalleled fatuity, straightening his tiny stature.

"By gad," thought Lucien, "I'll make you change that tone." And with perfect composure and significant emphasis he added:

"The Kortis affair, M. le Comte, the man who was wounded on the Austerlitz Bridge by a soldier he was trying to disarm."

"You may go," said the Minister, addressing his servants. But, as one of them still lingered: "Didn't you hear me? Get out!"

When the footman had left, he turned again to Lucien:

"The word Kortis, sir, would have been sufficient without explanations." His tone and manner were unbelievably insolent.

"M. le Comte, I am a novice in the affairs of state," Lucien said with marked emphasis. "In my father's circle I am not accustomed to a reception such as you have given me tonight. I wanted to bring to an end as quickly as possible a situation that was both painful and improper."

"What do you mean, sir, *improper*?" said the Minister in a

pinched nasal tone, lifting his head still higher, and more insolent than ever. "You had best weigh your words, sir."

"And if you add one more in that tone, M. le Comte, we will measure swords. Impertinence, sir, has never impressed me."

M. de Vaize now appeared from a remote study to see what was going on. He overheard the last words spoken by Lucien and realized that he himself must be the indirect cause of the altercation.

"Please, my friend, please!" he said to Lucien. "My dear colleague, this is the young officer I was telling you about. Let us go no further."

"There is only one way not to go further," Lucien rejoined with a composure that struck the two Ministers dumb. "There is absolutely only one way," he repeated icily, "and that is not to say another word about the incident, and to assume that the footman announced me to Your Excellencies."

"Sir . . ." exclaimed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, drawing himself up angrily.

"I beg Your Excellency a thousand pardons; but if you say another word, I shall hand in my resignation to M. de Vaize and I shall insult you in such a way, sir, that you will be forced to demand satisfaction."

"Come, let us be going," cried M. de Vaize, very much upset, taking Lucien by the arm. The latter listened for a word from M. de Beausobre. He heard nothing.

When they were in the carriage, as M. de Vaize was beginning a discourse in paternal vein, Lucien asked to be allowed first of all to give him an account of the Kortis affair. His account was long. At the outset he had spoken of the signed minutes and consultation of doctors. As soon as he had finished his report, the Minister asked to see the documents.

"I find I have forgotten to bring them with me," Lucien replied, saying to himself: "If the Comte de Beausobre wants to make trouble, these documents will prove that I was right in



insisting on seeing the Minister of the Interior at once and that I was not a petitioner forcing myself into his house."

Before reaching the Rue de Grenelle, they had finished with poor Kortis, and M. de Vaize tried once more to adopt an unctuous and fatherly tone.

"M. le Comte," Lucien interrupted, "I have been working for Your Excellency since five o'clock this afternoon. It is now one o'clock. Permit me to get back into my cabriolet which is following your carriage. I am dead tired."

M. de Vaize made one last attempt to be fatherly.

"Not another word about the incident," said Lucien. "The least little word will spoil everything."

At this the Minister let him go. Lucien got into his cabriolet. He told the servant to take the reins. He was too tired to drive himself. As they were crossing the Louis XV Bridge, his servant said:

"There goes the Minister."

"Ah," thought Lucien, "in spite of the lateness of the hour he is going back to his colleague's and I am quite certain that I shall be the subject of their conversation. I don't care about my post but, I swear, if he has me removed I shall force him to use his sword! These gentlemen can be as insolent as they please but they should know whom to pick. With the Desbacs, who are bent on making their fortunes at any price, it's all very well, but not with me."

When he got home he found his father, with a lighted candle in his hand, going upstairs to bed. Although Lucien longed passionately to have the advice of a man of such intelligence, he hesitated.

"Unhappily he is old and I must not keep him from his sleep. Politics will have to wait until tomorrow."

The next morning at ten o'clock he gave his father a detailed account of the whole affair. His father laughed.

"Now M. de Vaize will take you to dine at his colleague's.

But, believe me, there have been enough duels in your life as it is. At this stage they would do you more harm than good. Between them, these gentlemen have it all settled—you will be removed in two months or be made Prefect of Briançon or Pondichéry. Now, if the distant post they select does not suit you any more than it suits me, I will frighten them and will prevent your disgrace . . . or at least I'll try, and with some chance of success."

The dinner with His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, did not take place until two days later, and in the interval Lucien, still very busy with the Kortis affair, refused to allow M. de Vaize to mention the *incident*.

The day before the dinner, M. Leuwen recounted the anecdote to three or four diplomats. He withheld only the name of Kortis and the nature of the urgent affair that had forced Lucien to look for his Minister at one o'clock in the morning.

"All I can say about the untoward hour is that the affair had nothing to do with the telegraph," he remarked to the Russian Ambassador.

Two weeks later M. Leuwen became aware of a vague rumor going the rounds to the effect that his son was a Saint-Simonian. Whereupon, without his son's knowledge, he asked M. de Vaize to take him to call on his colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"And why, my dear friend?"

"Do let me have the pleasure of surprising Your Excellency."

And all the way to the Ministry, M. Leuwen never stopped teasing his friend on his curiosity.

He began the interview accorded him by His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in a very serious tone.

"There is no one, M. le Comte, who appreciates more than I do Your Excellency's talents; but you must admit that they are admirably seconded! Forty eminent personages covered with titles and decorations, whom I will name if you like, five

or six great ladies belonging to the highest nobility and fairly opulent, thanks to Your Excellency's generosity, do my son the honor of occupying themselves with him. Nothing simpler than for these respectable personages discreetly to spread the rumor that he is a Saint-Simonian. They could just as easily insinuate that on a certain crucial occasion he was lacking in courage. Better still, two or three of the estimable personages I have mentioned who, being still young, will take on anything, and are hotheads besides, can be counted on to pick quarrels with him; or, if they wanted to be kind and show some consideration for my gray hairs, these gentlemen, such as M. le Comte de —, M. de —, M. le Baron de — (who has an income of forty thousand francs), M. le Marquis de —, would confine themselves to saying that young Leuwen invariably wins at *écarté*. Your Excellency, I have come to you in your capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs to offer you—peace or war.”

M. Leuwen took a malicious pleasure in prolonging the interview thus begun as long as possible. When he left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he went to see the King, with whom he had obtained an audience. He repeated verbatim the conversation he had just had with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

“Now,” he said to his son on arriving home, “let me repeat for the second time the conversation I had the honor of having with the Ministers to whom you failed to show proper respect. But so that I won't be liable to a third repetition, let's go and find your mother.”

At the end of this conference in his mother's apartments, our hero thought he would hazard a word of thanks to his father.

“Now, my friend, you are becoming banal. You have never amused me so much as you have in the last month. I have you to thank for the *youthful* zeal with which, for the last two weeks, I've been watching things on the Bourse, for I have to

be prepared to play a trick or two on my two Ministers if they should allow themselves any impertinence in your regard. I really love you at last! For, as your mother will tell you, to borrow a phrase from the mystics, I have simply loved *her in you*. But you will have to reward my affection by accepting certain obligations."

"And what is it I have to do?"

"Come with me and I shall tell you."

When they were in his study, M. Leuwen said:

"First of all it is of prime importance to clear yourself of the imputation of Saint-Simonism. Your serious, I might even say, imposing air, might give it credence."

"Nothing could be simpler—with a good sword . . ."

"Yes, to give you the reputation of an inveterate duellist, which is almost as dismal. No, please, no more duels under any pretext!"

"Then what *do* you want?"

"A notorious love affair."

Lucien turned pale.

"Nothing less," his father continued. "You must seduce Madame Grandet—or (which would be more costly but perhaps less boring) ruin yourself for Mademoiselle Gosselin, and spend four hours with her every day. I will pay all the costs of this great passion."

"But I thought, dear father, I had the honor of being in love with Mademoiselle Raimonde?"

"She is not well enough known. Take a sample dialogue: 'Young Leuwen is certainly keeping Mademoiselle Raimonde.' . . . 'And who is Mademoiselle Raimonde? . . .' Now this is the way it should run: 'Young Leuwen is at present with Mademoiselle Gosselin.' . . . 'Egad! is he really? And is he her official lover?' 'He is mad about her, jealous . . . wants to be the only one.' . . . After that I shall have to introduce

you into at least ten houses where they will fathom the mystery of your Saint-Simonian sadness."

This alternative between Madame Grandet and Mademoiselle Gosselin greatly embarrassed Lucien.

The Kortis affair had been brought to a happy conclusion. M. de Vaize had even congratulated him. The too zealous agent had not died for a week and he had not talked.

Lucien now asked the Minister for a week's leave of absence to wind up some business affairs in Nancy. For some time he had felt a mad desire to see the little window with the parrot-green shutters. Having obtained his leave from the Minister, he spoke to his parents. They had no objection to this little trip to "Strasbourg," for Lucien would never have had the courage to pronounce the name Nancy.

"To make your absence seem less long to him, every day at two o'clock I shall look in on your Minister," said M. Leuwen.

Lucien was still ten leagues from Nancy when his heart began pounding uncomfortably. He could no longer breathe normally. As he thought it expedient to enter Nancy after nightfall and to avoid being seen by anyone, he stopped at a village situated about a league away. Even at this distance he was not master of his emotions. He could not hear a cart passing on the highroad without thinking he recognized the sound of Madame de Chasteller's carriage. . . .\*

\* [Stendhal never wrote the account of this brief visit of Lucien's to Nancy. He left seventeen blank pages and the following note: "The trip will occupy the blank pages of this notebook. While I am not in the right mood, I'll do Madame Grandet." According to another note Lucien remained "incognito" during his stay in Nancy.]

## CHAPTER TEN

WHILE YOU were away your Minister's telegraph has made me a lot of money," said M. Leuwen to his son on his return from Nancy, "and your presence was never more needed."

At dinner, Lucien found his friend Ernest Dévelroy. His cousin was most downcast because his moral savant, who had promised him four votes in the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, had died at Vichy; and, after duly burying him, Ernest perceived that he had just wasted four boring months as a nurse, and had won nothing but ridicule.

"For, one simply has to succeed," he said to Lucien. "And, by gad, the next time I devote myself to a member of the Institute, I'll choose a healthy one!"

Lucien marveled at his cousin's disposition. Ernest was depressed for no more than a week; by that time he had thought of a new plan, and proceeded to plunge into it with renewed energy. In the salons he would explain: "I owed a few days of infinite sorrow to the memory of our learned Descors. The friendship of that excellent man and his loss will mark a new era in my life—he has taught me how to die! I saw a sage on his deathbed, surrounded by all the consolations of Christianity. It is at the bedside of a dying man that one learns to appreciate religion. . . ."

A few days after Lucien's return, Ernest said to him:

"I hear that you are head over heels in love." (Lucien turned pale.) "By gad, you're a lucky fellow, everybody's talking about you! And now their chief occupation is trying to guess the name of the object of your passion. I ask nothing, but I shall

soon tell you whose are the lovely eyes that have stolen all your gaiety. Lucky Lucien, you have caught the public's attention! God, how fortunate you are to have been born of a father who gives dinners, frequents M. Pozzo di Borgo and is a friend of high diplomacy! If I had such a father I'd be a hero this winter, pointed out as a model of devoted friendship; and Descors dying in my arms would perhaps be more useful to me than Descors alive. For want of a father like yours, I perform miracles to no avail, or only to give me the reputation of being a schemer."

In the more modest salons of three old ladies, who were friends of his mother, Lucien came upon the same gossip.

Young Desbacs, whom he encouraged to talk about things besides ministerial matters, admitted that the best-informed persons spoke of him as a young man destined for great things but checked by a fatal passion. "Egad, there's no end of what that will do for you. Such a whitewashing will make you impermeable to ridicule for a long time."

Lucien defended himself as best he could, but thought:

"It is my unfortunate trip to Nancy that has given everything away."

He was far from suspecting that he owed this famous passion of his to his father who, since Lucien's encounter with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, had conceived a real fondness for his son, even to the extent of going to the Bourse himself—and on cold damp days, too—a thing which, since his sixtieth birthday, nothing else could have induced him to do.

"Lucien will end up by detesting me," he remarked to Madame Leuwen, "if I interfere with him too much or keep talking to him about his private affairs. I must be careful not to play the heavy father, so boring for a son if the father is bored or too fond of him."

Madame Leuwen's tender reticence was staunchly opposed

to saddling her son with a great love affair; she saw in this gossip a source of danger.

"What I should like for him," she said, "is a peaceful rather than a brilliant life."

"Impossible," M. Leuwen replied. "In all fairness, I couldn't wish him that. He must be suffering from a fatal passion. Otherwise his seriousness, which you so greatly prize, will do him an ill turn. He will become nothing but a dreary Saint-Simonian and (who knows?) perhaps later, say at thirty, the inventor of a new religion. All I can do is to leave him the choice of the fatal beauty for whom he will have this great, this profound infatuation. Is it to be Madame de Chasteller, Madame Grandet, Mademoiselle Gosselin, or that wretched little Raimonde—an actress with a salary of only six thousand francs?" (He failed to add what really rankled—"and who all day long has the impudence to be witty at my expense!"—for Mademoiselle Raimonde was much cleverer than Mademoiselle Des Brins, with whom she spent a great deal of her time.)

"Ah!" cried Madame Leuwen, "don't mention Madame de Chasteller. You will drive him to commit some real folly."

M. Leuwen now bethought him of his two old friends, Mesdames de Thémînes and Toniel, whom he had known for twenty years and who were both great friends of Madame Grandet. For many years he had looked after M. de Thémînes' business interests—a very great service in Paris, and one for which gratitude knows no bounds, for in the general rout of titles and the old nobility of birth, money is the only thing left, and income without anxiety is the most beautiful of all beautiful things. M. Leuwen went to see them to enquire into the state of Madame Grandet's heart.

We shall trim their replies of much of their long circumlocution, and even combine the information gathered from each of the ladies, who lived in the same house, shared the



same carriage, but did not always tell each other *everything*. Madame Toniel was endowed with a very strong character but also with a certain asperity; she was Madame Grandet's mentor in all the momentous events of the latter's life. As for Madame de Thérmines, she possessed infinite sweetness, a nice sense of fitness, and was the sovereign arbiter of what was or was not correct. Her lorgnette did not see very far, but within its range, it saw to perfection. Born into the highest society, she had made certain mistakes which she had subsequently been able to retrieve, and for the last forty years had never been wrong in her judgments on what the effect of any happenings in the salons of Paris would be. Her serenity had been a trifle ruffled during the last four years by two calamities: one, the appearance in society of names which never should have been found there or which never should have been heard announced by the lackeys of the best houses; and the other, the sorrow of no longer seeing places reserved in the regiments for all the young men of the best families who had formerly been friends of her grandsons whom she had long since lost.

M. Leuwen, who met Madame de Thérmines once a week either at his house or hers, thought it incumbent on himself to take his role of father seriously for her benefit. He went even further and decided that, considering her age, he could risk frankly deceiving her about his son's amatory career and suppress the name of Madame de Chasteller. He made a very pretty story of Lucien's adventures and, after entertaining her during the entire latter half of the evening, ended by confessing his present grave concern on his account; for, ever since Lucien had been taken to Madame Grandet's drawing room, three weeks ago, he had been a prey to the blackest despondency. M. Leuwen said that he very much feared a serious infatuation which would interfere with his own paternal projects for his cherished son. For, naturally, he had to think of a suitable marriage. . . .

"What is most singular," Madame de Thérmines rejoined thoughtfully, "is that, since her return from England, Madame Grandet seems also to have some anxiety on her mind."

But to take things in order. Here follows a résumé of what M. Leuwen learned from Mesdames de Thérmines and Toniel (seen separately and then together), as well as additional particulars we have gleaned from certain secret memoirs about this celebrated woman.

Madame Grandet was just about the prettiest woman in Paris, or at least one could not name the six prettiest women without including her among them. What was particularly alluring about her was her tall, lithe and charming figure. She had the loveliest blond hair in the world, and on horseback displayed not only the greatest possible grace but also daring. She had the tall blond beauty of the young Venetian women of Paul Veronese. Though pretty, her features were not very distinguished. As for her heart, it was the direct opposite of what the Italian heart is generally reputed to be. Hers was entirely alien to what are called the tender emotions and to all enthusiasm, yet she spent her life aping these sentiments. A dozen times Lucien found her weeping over the fate of some missionary priest preaching the Gospel in China, or over the hardships of some provincial family—*one of the very best families!* But in her heart of hearts, nothing seemed to her more ridiculous, in other words more bourgeois, than to be really moved. It was for her the surest sign of an inferior nature. She liked to read the *Mémoires* of Cardinal de Retz. They had for her the charm she vainly sought in novels. The political role played by Madame de Longueville and Madame de Chevreuse was for her what sentimental and dangerous adventures are to a young man of eighteen.

"What wonderful lives theirs were, if only they had been able to guard against those errors of conduct which expose us to public censure!"

Even love in its realest, sincerest aspects seemed to her nothing but a nuisance and a bore. Perhaps it was to this extraordinarily placid disposition that she owed her extraordinarily fresh complexion, which could safely vie with that of the most beautiful German women, and gave her that air of dewy youth and health which was a joy to the eye. She even liked to be seen at nine o'clock in the morning when she first got out of bed. At that moment, above all others, she was incomparable and, in spite of the triteness of the phrase, one could hardly refrain from likening her to the dawn. Not one of her rivals could compare with her insofar as complexion was concerned. Consequently she took great delight in prolonging the balls she gave till morning and having breakfast served to her guests in the full light of the morning sun with all the blinds wide open. If pretty women, never suspecting the treachery of this maneuver and carried away by the pleasure of the dance, thoughtlessly stayed on, Madame Grandet triumphed. It was the only moment when her soul really soared and her beauty seemed to her made expressly for the humiliation of her rivals. Music, painting, love were inanities to her, invented by and for petty souls. And she spent her life at the Bouffes enjoying serious entertainment for, as she was careful to explain, she preferred that theater because Italian singers are not excommunicated. Mornings she would paint water colors with a really distinguished talent. This seemed to her as necessary to a woman of society as an embroidery frame, and much less boring. The one thing that proved that she lacked real nobility was her habit, amounting almost to a necessity, of always comparing herself to something or someone in order to appraise and to judge herself, as, for example, to the noble ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

She had induced her husband to take her to England so that she might satisfy herself on two points: first, whether any English blond could boast as lovely a complexion as hers, and

second, whether she would be frightened on horseback. At the stately country seats to which she was invited, she experienced a vast deal of boredom but no cause for anxiety on either count.

At the time Lucien was first presented to her, she had just returned from England, where her stay had greatly aggravated her feeling of admiration for hereditary nobility. In England Madame Grandet had been merely the wife of one of the men of the July *Juste-milieu* who had been most highly honored by Louis-Philippe, and at every turn she had been made to feel that she was nothing but a *merchant's wife*. Her income, which in Paris gave her such an advantage, was fairly looked down upon in England as just another vulgarity. She came back from England with this preoccupation: not to remain merely a merchant's wife, but to become a Montmorency.

As her husband, a tall robust man of forty, enjoyed excellent health, widowhood was hardly to be hoped for. In fact no such idea had ever entered her head. Early in life her enormous fortune—and her pride too—had eliminated any temptations of a dubious nature, and she despised anything approaching crime. The point was to become a true Montmorency without stooping to anything she would ever be unable to acknowledge. It was like the diplomacy of Louis XIV when he was successful.

Her husband, a Colonel in the National Guard, had indeed taken the place, politically speaking, of the Rohans and the Montmorencys, but as far as she was personally concerned she had yet “to make her fortune.”

What would a Montmorency, hardly twenty years old and possessing an enormous fortune, do with all this felicity?

Besides, there was more to it than that.

Wasn't there something more she must do to succeed in being looked up to in society as a Montmorency would have been?

A lofty, sublime piety perhaps, or the wit of a Madame de Staël; or else an illustrious friendship, becoming, for example, the intimate friend of the Queen or of Madame Adelaide, a sort of Madame de Polignac of 1785, and thus the foremost woman of the Court, giving suppers to the Queen; or, if all that was perhaps too much to expect, at least an illustrious friendship in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

All these possibilities, all these different expedients, occupied her thoughts one after the other, and quite exhausted her, for she had more perseverance and courage than brains. Nor did she know how to ask for advice. There were her two friends Mesdames de Thémînes and Toniel, it is true, but to them she confided only a part of those projects which kept her awake nights. Several of the ideas of which we have spoken, and even more brilliant ones whose unlimited possibilities had presented themselves to her ambition, were quite outside the realm of probability.

The night Lucien was presented to Madame Grandet, he had found her playing Madame de Staël, and hence his disgust, already mentioned, for her terrifying prattle on every imaginable subject.

A short time before Lucien's trip to Nancy, Madame Grandet, since nothing had occurred to bring about the realization of her grand projects, had said to herself:

"Will I not be neglecting my actual advantages, and losing an opportunity of winning a great distinction, if I fail to inspire a hopeless passion which my lover's despair will make famous? In any case, wouldn't it be an admirable thing to have a distinguished young man go to America in order to forget me, the woman who would not accord him the slightest favor?"

This grave question had been maturely weighed without the least shred of feminine weakness, and all the more precisely weighed since it had always been the pitfall of the very

women whose destiny, whose way of life, she never ceased to envy. She particularly coveted the niche they had made for themselves in history.

"I should be neglecting an actual and very fleeting advantage," she said to herself, "if I failed to inspire a hopeless passion; but the choice is difficult. What would I not have given to win even the friendship of a man of noble birth? Physical attractions, youth and, above all, money have never meant anything to me; all I have ever desired was noble blood and a stainless name. But no man belonging to the ancient nobility of the Court has thought fit to accept that role. How can I hope to find one for the part of the despairing lover, in short, of the adorer of the wife of a merchant who has made a huge fortune?"

Thus Madame Grandet would argue with herself. She had strength of character and did not mince words in judging herself, but she lacked imagination and real intelligence. In her mind she reviewed all the endless maneuvers, the even abject devices she had stooped to, to induce two or three gentlemen of this caliber, who had by chance appeared in her drawing room, to come to call on her more frequently. All in vain. These noble gentlemen had attended for two or three months but gradually their visits became more and more rare.

All this was undoubtedly true, but it was nonetheless desirable to inspire a hopeless passion! While she was harboring these secret thoughts (unknown of course to M. Leuwen) Madame de Thérmines came one morning to spend an hour with her young friend for the purpose of finding out if, by chance, her heart was occupied with our hero. After taking into account her vanity, or rather ambition, and exercising all possible tact, Madame de Thérmines said to her:

"You are breaking hearts, my beauty, and you choose very well."

"Choose?" replied Madame Grandet very seriously. "But I

am so far from choosing that I don't even know the name of the unhappy knight. Is he a man of distinction?"

"He lacks nothing but noble birth."

"Are really good manners to be found without noble birth?" she replied, with a sort of discouragement.

"How I love the perfect tact that distinguishes you!" cried Madame de Thémynes. "In spite of the groveling admiration for that acid-eaten etching, the mind, that vitriol which bites into everything, corrodes everything, you do not look upon it as a compensation for good manners. Ah! you are really one of us! But I must say that your new victim has most distinguished manners. Of course it is not easy to judge at the moment because of the state of melancholy he has been in ever since he met you. After all, it is a man's gaiety, the character of his quips and his manner of expressing them that stamp him in society. And yet, if the man you have made miserable belonged to an old family, he would indubitably be placed in the front rank."

"Ah! it is M. Leuwen, Master of Petitions."

"Well, my dear, you are driving him to his grave."

"He doesn't seem unhappy to me," said Madame Grandet, "only bored."

Little more was said on the subject. Madame de Thémynes turned the conversation to politics, remarking à propos of something:

"What is utterly shocking—what decides everything today is the Bourse, where your husband does not go."

"It is almost two years at least since he set foot there," Madame Grandet was quick to rejoin.

"The men you receive in your house are the ones who make and unmake Ministers."

"But I don't receive such gentlemen exclusively by any means!" (In the same piqued tone.)

"You must not give up your splendid position, my dear!

And just between us," lowering her voice and assuming a confidential tone, "in estimating it you must not adopt the opinion of the enemies of that position. Once before, under Louis XIV, as that wicked Duc de Saint-Simon you're so fond of never tires repeating, the bourgeoisie took over the Ministry. What were Colbert and Séguier? In fact, Ministers can make the fortune of anyone they please. But who makes Ministers today? The Rothschilds, the —, the —, the Leuwens. By the way, wasn't it M. di Borgo who said the other day that M. Leuwen made a scene at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about his son, or else it was the son who, in the middle of the night, went to make a scene at the Minister's?"

Madame Grandet told her old friend what she had heard. It was approximately the truth, but told to the advantage of the Leuwens. Even so, she betrayed not the slightest trace of interest or intimacy, but rather a certain pique because of Lucien's air of boredom.

That evening, Madame de Thémynes felt that she could reassure M. Leuwen. She told him that neither love nor intrigue existed between his son and the beautiful Madame Grandet.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

**M**LEUWEN was a man of stout build and florid complexion, with twinkling eyes and thick curly gray hair. His suits and waistcoats were models of quiet elegance suitable to a man of his years. Everything about him was brisk and decided. From his keen black eyes and the quickly changing expression of his mobile features one might have fancied him a painter, a great artist (such as are no longer to be found), rather than a famous



banker. He put in an appearance in many drawing rooms, but spent most of his time with clever diplomats (he abhorred solemnity) and with the respectable corps-de-ballet of the Opera. He was their providence in all their little money matters. Every evening he could be found in the foyer of the Opera. He had little use for the society called "high." The impudence and charlatanism, without which no one could succeed, exasperated him, were too blatant. Just two things in the world he feared: dampness and bores. To escape these two pests he did things which would have made anyone else ridiculous, yet up to his sixty-fifth year (his present age) he it was who had always made others ridiculous and never the other way round. When strolling on the Boulevard, his lackey would hand him a topcoat whenever he passed by the Chaussée d'Antin. He changed his clothes at least five or six times a day, as the wind changed, and for that purpose kept quarters all over Paris. The turn of his mind was natural, vivacious and engagingly indiscreet, rather than marked by lofty ideals. At times he would forget himself, and had to be careful not to give way to a somewhat daring and indecorous propensity.

"If you hadn't made your fortune in speculation," his wife, who adored him, used to say, "you would never have succeeded in any other career. You tell a story in all innocence and never notice that you have trodden on two or three toes with fatal effect."

"I have guarded against this disadvantage: any man who is solvent is always sure of a thousand francs graciously at his disposal at my bank. Besides, for the last ten years nobody has thought of discussing me. I am accepted."

M. Leuwen told the truth to no one but his wife, and to her he told the whole truth. She acted for him as a second memory in which he had more confidence than in his own. At first he had tried to maintain a certain reserve when in the

presence of his son, but the restraint nettled him and spoiled all his pleasure in the conversation, and Madame Leuwen refused to be deprived of her son's company; deciding that Lucien's discretion could be trusted, he ended by saying everything in front of him.

This man, now well along in years, and whose tongue was the terror of everybody, was of a naturally cheerful disposition. But at this particular time he had for several days seemed dejected and worried. Evenings he gambled recklessly, he even allowed himself to speculate on the Bourse. Mademoiselle Des Brins gave two dances at which he did the honors.

One night at two o'clock, coming home from one of these evenings, he found his son warming himself in front of the fire in the drawing room, and all his pent-up vexation exploded:

"Go and bolt that door!" And, as Lucien came back to the fire, he exclaimed irritably, "Do you know how ridiculous I have become?"

"Have you, father? I hadn't noticed it."

"I love you, and consequently you make me unhappy; for of all cheats, love is the worst." He was growing more and more excited, and spoke in a serious tone his son had never heard before. "In my long life I have known but one exception, and that is unique: I love your mother. She is necessary to my life, and she has never given me an iota of distress. I decided that instead of looking upon you as a rival in her affections, I would love you. It is a ridiculous state that I always swore I would never fall into—you actually *keep me from sleeping at night!*"

At this Lucien grew really alarmed. His father never exaggerated, and Lucien understood that he was about to witness an access of real anger.

M. Leuwen was all the more irritated because for the past

two weeks he had been swearing that he would not say a single word to his son of what tormented him.

Suddenly, M. Leuwen left the room, saying:

"Kindly wait for me here."

He soon returned with a little wallet of Russian leather.

"Here are twelve thousand francs. If you refuse to take them I think we are going to quarrel."

"That would be something new in the way of quarrels," Lucien rejoined, smiling. "The roles would be reversed. . . ."

"Yes, that's not bad. Mildly witty. Well then, not to waste any more words, I insist that you fall madly in love with Mademoiselle Gosselin. And you're not just to give her your money and then fly away on your horse into the Meudon woods, or the devil knows where, as usual. The point is to spend all your evenings with her, to give her every moment of your time—in a word, to be completely mad."

"Mad about Mademoiselle Gosselin!"

"Devil take you! Mad about Mademoiselle Gosselin or anybody else, it doesn't matter. But the public must know that you have a mistress."

"And the reason for this stern command?"

"You know it very well! Don't be a hypocrite with your father, especially when he has your best interests at heart. The devil take you, and when he has taken you, may he never bring you back! I am sure if I stayed two months without seeing you I wouldn't think about you in this idiotic fashion any longer. Why couldn't you have stayed in your Nancy? It suited you very well, you would have become the worthy hero of two or three virtuous prudes."

Lucien flushed crimson.

"But in the position I have made for you, your infernally solemn air—downright doleful it is—so much admired in the provinces where it is only an exaggeration of the local fashion, gives you the ridiculous air of an infernal Saint-Simonian."

"But I am no Saint-Simonian. I think I have proved that to you."

"Well, you can be a Saint-Simonian, or anything a thousand times more idiotic, if you choose, but don't show it!"

"My dear father, I promise you I'll be more talkative, more cheerful, and I'll spend two hours instead of one at the Opera."

"Can a leopard change his spots? Will you ever be wild and frivolous? And all your life, unless I put some order into it, and do it within the next two weeks, your seriousness will be taken, not for a sign of intelligence, bad consequence of a good thing, but for everything that is most objectionable in the eyes of society. And in Paris, once you have turned society against you, you can expect a dozen pinpricks a day, for which the best remedy is to blow out your brains or, if you haven't the courage, to bury yourself in a Trappist monastery. And that's the pass you were in two months ago, while I was killing myself trying to make everyone believe you were ruining me by your youthful follies! And in this fine state of affairs, with that infernal intelligence written all over your face, you go and make an enemy of the Comte de Beausobre, an old fox who will never forgive you, for if you succeeded in cutting some sort of figure in the world and should decide to talk, sooner or later you two would have to cut each others' throats—which wouldn't suit him at all! In spite of that infernal intelligence of yours (which heaven confound!) you don't know it, but you have always at your heels eight or ten clever men, smooth-spoken, extremely virtuous, very well received in society, in addition to being spies of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Do you think you can kill them all off in duels? And if you are killed, what will become of your mother—for the devil if I should think of you twice a month if I didn't see you. And for your sake, all during the last three months, I've been running the risk of an attack of the gout

that could very well carry me off. I spend my whole life at the damned Bourse which is damper than ever since they installed stoves. For your sake, I refuse myself the pleasure of gambling my whole fortune, double or nothing—something that would amuse me very much. Now then, will you make up your mind to fall madly in love with Mademoiselle Gosselin?"

"So this is the way you declare war on those few little quarter-hours of freedom that were left me! I don't want to reproach you, but you have taken every minute of my time. There is no poor ambition-ridden man who works more than I do, for I count as work—and the hardest kind of work—the time I spend at the Opera and in drawing rooms where I wouldn't be seen once in a fortnight if I followed my own inclinations. Ernest aspires to a seat in the Academy, that little scamp of a Desbacs wants to become a Councilor of State, their ambition sustains them. But in my case, the only interest I have in all this is to prove my gratitude to you. Happiness for me would be, or at least so I believe, to live on an income of six or eight thousand francs either in Europe or America, wandering from one city to another, stopping for a month or for a year according to my fancy. The charlatanism, so indispensable in Paris, seems absurd to me, and yet I get angry when I find it succeeding. Here, even if one is rich, one has to be an actor always on the alert for fear of making oneself ridiculous. But my happiness doesn't depend on what people think of me. It would consist in coming to Paris for six or seven months a year to see whatever is new in painting, plays, inventions or pretty dancers. If I led a life like that, society would forget all about me, I should live here in Paris like a Russian or an Englishman. Instead of making me the happy lover of Mademoiselle Gosselin, why don't you allow me to take a trip of six months somewhere, anywhere—Kamchatka, for example, or Canton, or South America?"

"When you returned at the end of six months, you would

find your reputation completely ruined. Your odious vices would have been proved by irrefutable facts, and completely forgotten. And that is the worst thing that can happen to a reputation. Calumny would be delighted if it could force you to run away. Then you would be obliged to catch the public's attention all over again, and re-open the wound in order to cure it. Do you follow me?"

"Only too well, alas! I see plainly that you will not accept either six months of traveling, or six months of prison, in exchange for Mademoiselle Gosselin."

"Ah! heaven be praised, you're growing sensible! But I don't want you to think me capricious. Let's look at this thing together. M. de Beausobre has twenty, thirty, perhaps forty diplomatic spies who belong to good society, several in the most exclusive circles; he has voluntary spies like de Perte, who has an income of forty thousand francs. Madame la Princesse de Vaudemont used to be at his beck and call. These people do not lack tact, most of them have served under ten or a dozen Ministers, and the person they watch most closely, with the greatest care, is their Minister himself. I used to surprise them gathered together in conference on the subject. I have even been consulted by two or three of them who are indebted to me in financial matters. Four or five of them (M. N—— for example, whom you have seen here), when they get a sure tip, want to speculate on the market and haven't enough security. I help them out, now and then, for small sums. Well, two weeks ago, I'd have you know, I made them admit that Beausobre entertains an insane spite against you. He has the reputation of being ruthless—except when there is some chance of a grand cordon. Perhaps he is ashamed of having shown himself weak in your presence. The wherefore of his hate I don't know, but the fact is he does you the honor of hating you.

"But of one thing I am sure: the current gossip to the effect

that you are a Saint-Simonian and that only your fondness for me keeps you in society, has been deliberately circulated. When I die, it is being said, you will openly profess Saint-Simonism, or found a new religion.

"If Beausobre's anger lasts, I wouldn't guarantee that one of his spies won't serve him as the followers of Henry II served their King against Becket. In spite of their fine cabriolets, several of these gentlemen are often in pressing need of a favor of fifty louis, and would be only too happy to find such a sum by means of a duel. This is why I have had the weakness to talk to you on the subject. You young scoundrel, you have made me do something that hasn't happened to me for at least fifteen years, you have made me break a promise I made to myself. It is this question of a gratuity of a hundred louis as the price of sending you *ad patres* that made it impossible for me to speak to you in the presence of your mother. If she lost you she would die, and I could then commit all the follies in the world, nothing would ever console me for her loss; and," he added dramatically, "our family would be erased from the face of the earth."

"I'm afraid you are making fun of me," Lucien said, and his voice seemed to falter as he spoke. "You know that whenever you contrive an epigram about me, it always strikes me as so pat that for days I keep repeating it to myself against myself. The devil of doubt gets the better of the man of action in me. Don't tease me and I shall have the courage to be frank with you; don't joke about something which I am sure you know, but which I have never admitted to a living soul."

"The devil! It's news in that case. I shall never mention it."

"I am resolved," Lucien added in a quick curt tone, looking down at the floor, "to be faithful to a mistress I have never possessed. My relations with Mademoiselle Raimonde, involving no moral considerations, give me scarcely any remorse, and yet . . . (you are going to make fun of me) I do feel

remorse sometimes . . . whenever I find myself liking her. But when I'm not making love to her . . . I am so depressed I can't help thinking of suicide, for nothing interests me. The only moment of diversion I have known was at the bedside of that poor devil Kortis . . . and then at what a price! Fairly courting disgrace. . . . But you must be laughing at me," he said, stealthily raising his eyes for a moment.

"Not at all! Happy the man who has a great passion, even if it is only a passion for a diamond—like that Spaniard whose story is told by Tallemant des Réaux. Old age is nothing but the absence of madness, the loss of illusion and passion. And I put absence of madness far above the decline of physical powers. I should like to be in love if it were only with the ugliest cook in Paris and know that she reciprocated with the same ardor. I should say with Saint Augustine: *Credo quia absurdum*. The more absurd a passion is the more I envy it."

"But please be merciful, and on the subject of my touch of madness, never make even an indirect allusion, although no one would understand it but myself."

"*Never!*" cried M. Leuwen, and his face took on an expression of solemnity Lucien had never seen before. For M. Leuwen was never absolutely serious; when there was no one else to laugh at he laughed at himself, often without even Madame Leuwen's being aware of it. This change of physiognomy delighted our hero and encouraged his weakness.

"So you see," Lucien went on in a more assured voice, "if I make love to Mademoiselle Gosselin, or any other notorious young lady, it is inevitable that, sooner or later, she would make me a happy man, and that is what horrifies me. If it's all the same to you, I'd rather choose a virtuous woman."

At this M. Leuwen burst out laughing.

"Don't be angry," he said, choking with laughter. "I am not being unfaithful to our agreement. . . . I am not laughing at the forbidden subject. . . . But where the devil are you go-



ing to find your virtuous woman? . . . Ah! my God" [tears of merriment filled his eyes], "and when one fine day your virtuous woman finally confesses that your passion is reciprocated, when the happy hour arrives . . . then what will you do?"

"I shall gravely reproach her for her want of virtue," Lucien calmly replied. "Wouldn't that be in keeping with this moral age?"

"But to make it a really good joke this mistress must be chosen in the Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"Unfortunately, you are not a Duke and I could never be witty and gay if I had to respect some of their preposterous prejudices which we laugh at even in our *Juste-milieu* drawing rooms—stupid enough themselves, God knows!"

While he was speaking Lucien began to realize just what he was thoughtlessly promising. He immediately grew sad and said, in spite of himself:

"But just think what you are asking! A great passion with all its demands, constancy and the monopoly of every second!"

"Precisely."

*"Pater meus, transeat a me calix iste!"*

"But you can understand my reasons.

Make your arrest yourself, and choose your own punishment.

"Of course the joke would be better with a virtuous lady of exalted piety and special privileges, but you are not what such ladies require. Moreover, power, a very pleasant thing, has passed from those people to us. Very well, among us of the new nobility, gained by crushing or circumventing the July Revolution. . . ."

"Oh! I see what you are leading up to!"

"And where," M. Leuwen went on with an air of the most perfect candor, "where could you do better? Isn't Madame Grandet's virtue *patterned after* the Faubourg Saint-Germain?"

"Just as Dangeau was not a great nobleman but only *patterned after* a great nobleman. No! to me she is really too ridiculous. I could never accustom myself to being desperately in love with Madame Grandet. God! What a deluge of words! What pretentiousness!"

"But at Mademoiselle Gosselin's you would have to meet impossible people without taste. Besides, the more your mistress differs from the woman you love, the less infidelity is involved."

M. Leuwen suddenly crossed to the other end of the drawing room. He was angry with himself for this last allusion.

"I have broken our agreement," he thought, "that is bad, very bad. But, damn it all, can't I be permitted to think aloud with my own son?"

"My dear boy," he said, going back to Lucien, "my last remark was wretched, and I shall do better in the future. But there—the clock is striking three. If you make this sacrifice it is solely for my sake. I shan't point out that, like the prophet, you have been living in a cloud for the last three months, and that when you come out of your cloud you will be astonished at the new aspect everything will have for you. . . . Naturally you believe your own feelings rather than my arguments. So, all my affection dares ask of you is the sacrifice of six months of your life. The only really bitter one will be the first; after that you will get used to the ways of Madame Grandet's famous drawing room, frequented by a few passably amusing men—provided, of course, you are not driven out by her terrible virtue, in which case we'll look for another virtue. Do you feel brave enough to sign a contract for six months?"

Lucien paced the drawing room without replying.

"If you are going to sign the contract, I wish you would sign it right away and let me have a good night's sleep, for" [with a smile] "because of you, I haven't slept for two weeks."

Lucien stopped short, looked at his father and threw him-

self into his arms. M. Leuwen was very much touched by this embrace: he was sixty-five!

Still in each other's arms, Lucien asked his father:

"Will this be the last sacrifice you ask of me?"

"Yes, my boy, I swear it. You have made me very happy. Good night!"

Lucien remained standing in the drawing room lost in thought. The unquestionably sincere emotion of so undemonstrative a man and that touching *you have made me very happy*, still echoed in his heart.

But, on the other hand, a love affair with Madame Grandet seemed a monstrous thing—a perfect hydra of disgust, boredom and wretchedness.

"My fate was not unhappy enough already," he said to himself. "To give up all that is most beautiful, most moving, most sublime in the world was not enough; I must now spend my life with something utterly low, utterly insipid, putting up with a constant affectation which represents everything that is most vapid, vulgar and detestable in the general trend of the world today! Ah, my fate is unendurable!"

Then all at once he thought: "But let's see what reason would say. Even if I had none of the feelings I ought naturally to have for my father, I should still in strict justice owe him obedience, for what Ernest says is true: I have proved myself incapable of earning eighty-five francs a month. If my father didn't give me what it takes to live in Paris, wouldn't it be much worse to have to earn enough than to make love to Madame Grandet? No! a thousand times, no! Why deceive myself?"

"Of course in that salon I can always think my own thoughts; I may meet some curious phenomena, famous men. Whereas, as the slave of an agency of some Amsterdam or London merchant, correspondent of the bank, my thoughts would have to be constantly on what I was writing for fear of

making mistakes. I'd rather go back to garrison life: drill all morning, billiard rooms all evening. With an allowance of a hundred louis I could live very well. But who is to give me the hundred louis? My mother? And if she didn't have them, could I live on what my present possessions would bring, plus my soldier's pay of ninety-five francs a month?"

Lucien lingered a long time over this question, to put off facing one much more terrible:

"What am I going to do tomorrow to show Madame Grandet that I adore her?"

The last words stirred profound and tender memories of Madame de Chasteller. And he felt such an irresistible charm in these thoughts that he said to himself:

"Tomorrow is time enough for business. . . ."

That *tomorrow* can hardly be taken literally, for when at last he blew out his candle the melancholy sounds of a winter morning already filled the street.

He had a great deal of work that morning both at the Ministry and at the Bourse. Until two o'clock he studied the articles of a long ordinance relative to the National Guard. The duties of the Guard throughout France had to be made more and more boring, for after all, it was certainly not with the aid of the National Guard that the government intended to keep order! For the last few days the Minister had been in the habit of sending to Lucien (for his conscientious examination) all the reports of the division heads that required intelligence and honesty rather than a profound knowledge of the forty-four thousand laws, orders and circulars which govern the Ministry of the Interior. The Minister called Lucien's reports *brief summaries*; these *brief summaries* were often ten or fifteen pages long. Since Lucien had been very busy with telegraphic business, and found himself several *brief summaries* in arrears, the Minister authorized him to take two clerks to assist him; he even sacrificed half of his own inner office. But, as by this ar-

range the clerks would be separated only by a thin partition (muted with mattresses, to be sure) from all the momentous affairs of state, the difficulty was to find someone absolutely discreet and with a sense of honor who would be incapable of furnishing articles, even anonymous articles, to the abhorred *National*.

After searching in vain through all the departments, Lucien suddenly remembered a former student of the *École Polytechnique*, an extremely taciturn youth who had decided to be a tradesman and who, because he had superior attainments, thought them inferior. This new clerk, named Coffe, the most silent man at the *École Polytechnique*, cost the Ministry eighty louis, for Lucien had found him in the prison of *Sainte-Pélagie*, and could only get him out by paying his creditors something on account. But Coffe agreed to work for only ten louis and—most important—one could talk in front of him with impunity. This assistant made it possible for Lucien occasionally to get away from his office for a quarter of an hour at a time.

Coffe was a little man, nervous, skinny, alert, active and almost completely bald. He was twenty-five years old and looked thirty-six. Wretchedly poor and equally honest, discontent was written all over his face, which never brightened except when he was engaged in some strenuous activity. Coffe had been famous at the *École Polytechnique* for his almost unbroken silence; but, without his realizing it, his little gray eyes that were never at rest spoke for him. In his contempt for the present age, Coffe was sure that there was nothing worth getting excited about. But, in spite of himself, injustice and absurdity roused his anger; afterwards he would be furious with himself for having been angry and for having taken an interest in that absurd and rascally mass of humanity comprising the vast majority of mankind. A degree from the *École Polytechnique* was his sole fortune. After being expelled, he had turned everything he possessed into cash and with a

capital of three thousand francs had set up a little business. He soon went bankrupt and was sent to Sainte-Pélagie, where he would have spent five years, only to find at the end of them the same poverty awaiting him in the outside world, had not Lucien come to his rescue. He planned, if ever he could get together an income of four hundred francs, to go to Provence and there live in solitude.

A week later, the Comte de Vaize received five or six anonymous denunciations of M. Coffe. But as soon as Coffe left Sainte-Pélagie, Lucien, unknown to him, had taken the precaution of placing him under the surveillance of M. Crapart, the Ministry's Chief of Police. It was thus proved that M. Coffe had no connection with the liberal newspapers; as for his having any relations with the political committee of Henri V, even the Minister joked with him about it.

"Get their few louis out of them if you can. I don't mind," he said to Coffe, who was very much shocked at the proposal, for he happened to be an honest man.

To Coffe's exclamations, the Minister replied:

"I understand! You want some mark of favor that will stop these anonymous letters from supernumeraries jealous of this post M. Leuwen has obtained for you. Very well," he said, turning to Lucien, "make out an order for me to sign authorizing M. Coffe to have copies made, in any of the departments, of documents needed in duplicate by my private staff—and without any delays."

At this moment the Minister was interrupted by the announcement of a telegraphic dispatch from Spain. This dispatch quickly took Lucien's thoughts away from all these bureaucratic arrangements and had him jumping into a cabriolet and speeding swiftly toward his father's bank, and from there to the Bourse. As usual he carefully avoided going in himself, but, while awaiting news from his agents, went to look over the latest pamphlets in a nearby reading room.

Here he was discovered by three of his father's employees who had all been looking for him everywhere. He was handed a note of two lines from his father:

"Rush to the Bourse, go in yourself, stop all operations. Sell even at a loss, then come to me at once."

This order astonished him. He hastened to carry it out, had some difficulty, but finally arrived at his father's office.

"Well, did you succeed?"

"Completely. But why? It seemed an excellent thing."

"It is by far the best we've ever handled. There was a three thousand franc profit to be realized."

"Then why sell out?" asked Lucien, looking puzzled.

"Egad, and I don't know why," M. Leuwen mysteriously replied. "You will find that out from your Minister if you know how to question him. You'd better hurry back now and reassure him. He is insane with anxiety."

M. Leuwen's attitude only intensified Lucien's curiosity. He hastened to the Ministry and found M. de Vaize pacing the floor of his bedroom with the door double-locked, and in a state of profound agitation.

"He is really the most timorous of men," thought Lucien.

"Well, my friend, have you succeeded in getting rid of everything?"

"Absolutely everything except for a matter of some ten thousand francs. I haven't been able to find Rouillon who has orders to buy."

"Ah, my friend, I would give fifty francs, I would give a hundred francs to get back that scrap too, and not to seem to have made the slightest profit on the cursed telegram. Will you go and get back those ten thousand francs?"

The Minister's whole air said, "Hurry!"

"I'll never know the inside of this affair if I don't get it out of him while he is still in such a state."

"The truth is, I wouldn't know where to go," Lucien said

with the air of a man who has no desire to get into a cabriolet again. "M. Rouillon is dining out. I could perhaps look for him at home in another two hours, and then explore the neighborhood around Torton's. But, would Your Excellency care to tell me the why and wherefore of all this trouble I have gone to, and which is going to take up my whole evening?"

"I really shouldn't tell you," His Excellency replied, looking very much worried, "but I am sure, and have been for a long time, of your perfect discretion. *Certain persons* are reserving this little venture for themselves; and," he added with a look of terror, "it is a miracle, one of those strokes of luck, that I discovered it in time. That reminds me—will you be good enough to buy a very pretty watch—a lady's watch?"

The Minister went to his desk and took out two thousand francs.

"Here are two thousand francs. I want it done handsomely; if necessary go as high as three thousand. Can you get something presentable for that?"

"I think so."

"Well then, this pretty watch with a gold chain and with one volume of Balzac's novels bearing an uneven number, say, 1, 3 or 5, must be taken, by someone absolutely trustworthy, to Madame Lavernay, 90 Rue Sainte-Anne. Now that you know everything, my friend, do me one last favor, don't leave the thing half done. Get me back those ten thousand francs, so that it can never be said, or at least proved, that I ever made one penny on that telegram."

"Your Excellency need have no further worry in this matter, it is as good as done!" Lucien replied, taking his leave with every mark of respect.

Lucien had no difficulty in finding M. Rouillon who was peacefully dining with his wife and children in their third-floor apartment. And with the promise of paying him the difference that very evening at the Café Torton, which might



amount to fifty or a hundred francs, all trace of the transaction was now obliterated, and so he informed the Minister in a brief note.

Lucien did not arrive home until the end of dinner. He was jubilant all the way from the Place des Victoires, where M. Rouillon lived, to his father's house on the Rue de Londres. His herculean task for the evening in Madame Grandet's drawing room now seemed to him a simple matter. So true is it that people whose imaginations are their worst enemy should always start action as soon as possible when they have anything painful to accomplish and never give themselves time to think about it beforehand.

"I shall talk *ab hoc et ab hac*," Lucien said to himself, "and say anything that comes into my head, good, bad, or indifferent. I suppose that is the way to appear brilliant in the eyes of that sublime woman, Madame Grandet. For one must be brilliant before being tender. The gift is despised if the object presented is not of great price."

## CHAPTER TWELVE

**F**ORGIVE ME, mother, all the trite things I shall be guilty of tonight," said Lucien, as he took leave of his mother at nine o'clock.

When he arrived at the Grandet mansion he examined his surroundings with new curiosity—the porter, the courtyard, the great stairway—for it was in the midst of all these things that his campaign was about to begin. Everything was magnificent, costly and new. In the antechamber, however, a blue velvet screen, studded with gold nails and a trifle worn, might have been saying to those who passed: "You see, our wealth

is not of recent date . . ."; but to a Grandet a screen was an investment and not what it has to say to people passing through the antechamber.

Lucien found Madame Grandet surrounded by a small group of her more intimate friends. There were seven or eight persons in the elegant rotunda where she always received at this hour. It was early—much too early to arrive at Madame Grandet's. Lucien was well aware of this fact, but he wanted to play the *lovesick adorer*. In the light of candles placed successively at all vantage points, Madame Grandet was examining a bust of Cleopatra by Tenerani, which the King's Ambassador at Rome had just sent her. The expression of the Egyptian queen was simple and noble. The company gave vent to its admiration in high-sounding phrases.

"She is illuminating their vulgarity," Lucien said to himself. "All these smug faces and graying hair seem to be saying: 'Oh! How prosperous I am!'"

A Deputy of the Center, and an intimate of the house, proposed making up a pool at billiards. Lucien recognized the booming voice as that of the Deputy whose duty it was in the Chamber to laugh whenever, by chance, some generous measure was proposed.

Madame Grandet hastened to ring and order the billiard room lighted. For Lucien everything now took on a new aspect.

"There is some good in having a plan, no matter how ridiculous it may be. She has a charming figure and playing billiards provides hundreds of occasions to show it in alluring postures. It is surprising that the religious proprieties of the Faubourg Saint-Germain have not yet thought of forbidding this game!"

Over the billiard table Lucien began talking almost incessantly. His gaiety increased as the success of his heavy com-

monplaces made him quite forget the embarrassing necessity of paying court, by paternal order, to Madame Grandet.

At first his sallies were really too hackneyed, and he amused himself making fun of his own words. It was barber-shop wit—anecdotes repeated everywhere, stories from the newspapers . . .

"She is a mass of absurdities," he thought, "but she is, nevertheless, accustomed to a certain standard of wit. Anecdotes are all right, but preferably ones that are a little less trite, heavy commentaries but on delicate subjects—on the tenderness of Racine as compared to Virgil, on the Italian tales from which Shakespeare took his plots; never any quick, pointed remarks: they would pass unnoticed. But the same rule does not hold true for glances, especially when one is very much in love." And he contemplated with barely disguised admiration Madame Grandet's charming attitudes.

"God! What would Madame de Chasteller say if she could see one of these glances of mine?"

But I must forget her to be happy here,"

he murmured to himself. And he brushed aside this fatal thought, but not before emotion had darkened his eyes.

Madame Grandet herself looked at him in a very special fashion, not tenderly, it is true, but in pleasant surprise. She remembered vividly all that Madame de Thérmines had told her a few days before of Lucien's passion for her. It now seemed to her strange that she had thought Madame de Thérmines' revelations so ridiculous.

"Really he is quite presentable," she said to herself, "he has great distinction."

Lucien had drawn ball number 6. A tall silent young man, apparently a mute adorer of the mistress of the house, had number 5 and Madame Grandet number 4. Lucien tried to kill the 5, succeeded, and thereby found himself in a position

to play on Madame Grandet's ball and make her lose the game, a proceeding he avoided with considerable skill. He attempted only the most difficult shots, and had the misfortune of never hitting Madame Grandet's ball and of almost always placing her in an advantageous position. Madame Grandet was overjoyed.

"Can the hope of winning a pool of twenty francs," Lucien thought, "really excite her chambermaid soul, tenant of such a lovely body? The game is nearly over, let's see if my conjecture is correct."

Lucien let himself be killed; it was now the turn of number 7 to play on Madame Grandet. This number belonged to a Prefect on leave, a great braggart with all the conceit in the world, including that of being a good billiard player. This fatuous puppy kept boasting in the worst possible taste of all the points he was going to make, and threatening Madame Grandet with killing her ball or putting her in a disadvantageous position.

Seeing her fate reversed by the *death* of Lucien, Madame Grandet began to be very ill-tempered, and bit her lovely fresh lips, now tightly compressed.

"So that's the way she looks when she is piqued!" thought Lucien.

At the third hit from the pitiless Prefect, Madame Grandet glanced ruefully at Lucien, and Lucien had the temerity to respond by watching amorously all her charming postures, which, in spite of her despair, she did not neglect. Lucien, *dead* though he was, was very active around the table, following Madame Grandet's ball with apparently all the anxiety of keenest interest. With affected and somewhat ridiculous alacrity, he took her part in her unjustified resentment against the conceited Prefect who remained *alone* with her and who was determined to win.

Soon Madame Grandet lost the pool, but Lucien had ad-

vanced so considerably in her estimation that she thought fit to make him a little dissertation, geometrical and profound, on the angles formed by the billiard balls striking the cushions of the table. Lucien raised some objections.

"Ah," Madame Grandet rejoined, "it is true, you are a student of the École Polytechnique. But being an expelled student you are probably not very well up on geometry."

Lucien suggested experimenting. They measured distances on the table. The experiments elicited from Madame Grandet charming exclamations of surprise and delightful little cries, also another opportunity for displaying those alluring postures, so provocative indeed that at one time Lucien thought:

"I could not have asked more of Mademoiselle Gosselin!"

From that moment he was in wonderful form. Madame Grandet abandoned the scientific experiments to propose their playing a game. She found Lucien interesting because he surprised her. "I can't get over it," she said to herself, "how stupid shyness can make even the most agreeable men!"

About ten o'clock a good many people began to arrive. Everyone was in the habit of bringing any notable persons passing through Paris to meet Madame Grandet. Only the really famous artists and great noblemen of the highest rank were missing from her collection. And their presence in Paris, invariably heralded in all the newspapers, never failed to throw her into a very bad humor; she would even indulge, at times, in semi-republican remarks at their expense, which very much annoyed her husband. At half-past-ten this husband, all puffed up with the favor shown him by the King of his choice, came in with a Minister and, on their heels, three or four Deputies very influential in the Chamber. Five or six scholars who were present began to pay court to the Ministers and even to the Deputies. Soon they had as rivals two or three celebrated writers who were a little less servile in manner but perhaps more slavish at heart, hiding their sycophancy under the perfect ur-

banity of their style. They would begin in a rhetorical tone softened by indirect compliments of an admirable delicacy. They reduced the conceited Prefect, terrified by this language, to silence.

"These are the people we make such fun of at home," thought Lucien. "Here they are admired."

Most of the well-known figures of Paris appeared one after the other.

"The only clever men missing are those who have the bad taste to belong to the opposition. How can anyone have respect enough left for the filthy bit of matter called man to belong to an opposition? . . . In the midst of so many celebrities my reign must surely be over."

At that moment Madame Grandet crossed the length of the drawing room to speak to him.

"What audacity!" he said to himself, laughing. "Why the devil this special attention? Can she really afford such behavior? I must be a duke without knowing it!"

There was an abundance of Deputies in the drawing room. Lucien noticed that they were all talking in loud voices, and were trying to make themselves conspicuous. They held their grizzled heads as high as possible, and took care to make their gestures brusque and emphatic.

One of them set his gold box down on the table where he was playing cards, in such a way as to rouse the envy of two or three of his neighbors; another, settling himself in his chair, kept scraping it on the floor with no regard for neighboring ears.

"They all have the look of a big landowner who has just renewed a profitable lease," Lucien thought.

The one who had been scraping his chair on the floor so unpleasantly came into the billiard room a few minutes later, and asked Lucien if he might look at the *Gazette de France* which Lucien was reading. He *begged* this little favor with

such a humble air that our hero was touched because it reminded him of Nancy. And suddenly Lucien's eyes stared unseeingly, and his mouth lost its expression of urbanity. He was roused from his reverie by bursts of laughter next to him. A famous writer was telling an amusing anecdote about the Abbé Barthélemy, author of the *Voyage d'Anacharsis*. Then followed an anecdote about Marmontel, and still a third about the Abbé Delille.

"All this merriment is at bottom dry-as-dust and dreary. These Academicians live solely on the absurdities of their predecessors, but will themselves die bankrupt and leave nothing for their successors, being too timid to commit absurdities. Here is none of that heedless fun there used to be at Madame d'Hocquincourt's once M. d'Antin got us started."

When a fourth anecdote began on the absurdity of Antoine-Léonard Thomas, Lucien could endure no more and went back to the large drawing room through a gallery ornamented with busts. He came upon Madame Grandet standing in one of the doorways, and again she hailed him.

"It would be ungrateful of me not to join her group in case she takes a notion to play Madame de Staël."

Lucien had not long to wait. That evening a painfully thin young German scholar, with a mass of blond hair parted in the middle, had been presented to Madame Grandet. She was talking to him about all the learned discoveries made by Germans: Homer had perhaps written only one of the famous "Homeric hymns" whose masterly treatment, the fruit of chance, is so admired by pedants. Madame Grandet spoke very well of the Alexandrian School. A large group had gathered around her. The subject of Christian antiquities was brought up and Madame Grandet immediately looked serious and gave the corners of her mouth a downward twist.

Then, of all things, what did this newly presented German do, but attack the Catholic Mass to a bourgeois woman of the

court of Louis-Philippe? These Germans are the very kings of tactlessness!

"The Mass in the Fifth Century," he explained, "was nothing but a social gathering at which bread was broken in memory of Jesus Christ. It was a sort of tea party for the faithful. It never occurred to them that they were doing anything solemn or out of the ordinary, and much less that a miracle was taking place, the incarnation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Saviour. Then we see this tea party of the early Christians gradually growing in importance and taking its present form."

"Good God! Where ever did you find all that, my dear sir?" cried Madame Grandet, horrified. "In some of your German authors, most likely, although they are usually so sympathetic to sublime and mystical ideas, and for that very reason are cherished by all right-thinking people. A few must have gone astray, and as your language is, unfortunately, so little known to my frivolous compatriots, they have been saved from all refutation."

"No, Madam. The French too have very great scholars," replied the young German dialectician, who had apparently learned polite forms of address in order to have the pleasure of spinning out discussions interminably. "But as French literature, Madam, is so rich and the French have so many treasures, they are like people with enormous wealth, ignorant of half the treasures they possess. This whole authentic story of the Mass I found in old Father Mabillon, who has just given his name to one of the streets of your brilliant capital. To be exact, it is not in Mabillon's text—the poor monk would hardly have dared—but in his notes. Your Mass, Madam, is a recent invention; it is like your Paris which did not yet exist in the Fifth Century."

All along Madame Grandet had been replying in hesitant and ineffectual phrases, which the German, adjusting his



glasses, would invariably answer with facts, or, if these were contested, with textual citations. The monster had an astonishing memory.

Madame Grandet was exceedingly vexed.

"How wonderful Madame de Staël would have been in a moment like this," she thought, "surrounded by such a large attentive audience! I see at least thirty people listening to us and here I am, incapable of finding a word to reply, and it is too late to become indignant!"

As she was counting the listeners who, after laughing at the strange appearance of the German, were beginning to admire him precisely because of his peculiar gawkinsness and his novel way of adjusting his glasses, Madame Grandet's eye caught Lucien's. In her panic they almost begged for sympathy. She had just made the discovery that her most bewitching glances had no effect on the young German who, completely absorbed in listening to himself, was blind to them.

Lucien deciphered Madame Grandet's suppliant look as an appeal to his chivalry; he made his way through the listening circle and took his place beside the young German dialectician.

"But, sir ..... " \*

It turned out that the German was not overly awed by French wit and irony. Lucien had counted too much on this means of escape, and, as he did not know the first thing about the question, did not even know in what language Mabillon had written, he was defeated.

At one o'clock Lucien left the Grandet mansion where every effort had been made to please him. His soul was dried up. He loathed everything he had heard—the anecdotes of the

\* Stendhal left this sentence blank with a marginal reminder to consult his acquaintance, Ampère, son of the great French physicist, for some plausible objection, or, as Stendhal puts it in his inimitable English: "To ask objection, the less bad, to Mr J. J. Ampère."

famous writers, the learned discussion, all the admirably correct manners. It was with delight that he gave himself up to an hour's tête-à-tête with the memory of Madame de Chasteller. Such men as he had seen tonight, and he had seen the flower of their kind, almost made him doubt the possibility of the existence of beings like Madame de Chasteller. Joyfully he recaptured the beloved image, and it had something of the charm of novelty, the one thing usually lacking in the memory of love.

The writers, scholars, Deputies whom he had just met at Madame Grandet's, took good care not to appear in Madame Leuwen's caustic drawing room; they would have been made fun of pitilessly. There everybody made fun of everybody else. So much the worse for fools and hypocrites who did not have an infinite store of wit. The titles of Duke, Peer of France, Colonel of the National Guard (as M. Grandet had discovered) saved no one from the most sprightly irony.

"I have no favor to ask of any man, either the governing or the governed," M. Leuwen would sometimes remark in his drawing room. "I address myself exclusively to their purses. Mornings in my office, it is for me to prove that their interest is the same as mine. Outside my office I have only one interest, to relax and to laugh at fools, whether they are on the throne or in the gutter. And so, my friends, laugh at me if you can."

The next day Lucien spent his entire morning trying to understand a denunciation of the Algerian policy by M. Gaudin. The King had asked M. de Vaize for a well-founded opinion on the subject. This was most flattering inasmuch as it was properly an affair for the Minister of War. M. de Vaize had spent the whole night over it and had done an excellent piece of work. He had then sent for Lucien.

"My friend, I want you to criticize this ruthlessly," he said, as he gave Lucien his much corrected copybook. "Try to find

objections. I would rather be criticized by my aide-de-camp in private than by my colleagues in the middle of a Cabinet meeting. As you finish with each page have it copied by some *discreet* clerk—the writing doesn't matter. What a pity yours is so frightful! You never bother to form your letters. Couldn't you try to reform?"

"Can a bad habit be reformed? If that were possible how many two-million-franc thieves would become honest men!"

"This Gandin insists that the General tried to silence him with fifteen hundred louis. . . . All this, both your criticism and a fair copy of my report, I must have within eight hours. I want to put it in my portfolio. But I ask you to be unsparing in your criticism. If we could be sure your father wouldn't make one of his epigrams on the treasures of the Bey's citadel, I would give anything to have his advice on the question."

Lucien glanced through the Minister's rough draft, which was twelve pages long.

"Nothing in the world could persuade my father to read a report of such length, and, in addition, the documents will have to be verified."

Lucien found that this problem was as difficult, at least, as the origin of the Mass. At seven-thirty he sent M. de Vaize the result of his labors, which was quite as long as the Minister's report, together with a fair copy of the report. His mother had managed to delay dinner so that they were still at table when he got home.

"What makes you so late?" M. Leuwen asked him.

"His affection for me," replied his mother, "for it would certainly have been more convenient for him to eat at a tavern. And what can I do to show my gratitude?"

"Persuade my father to give me his advice on a little opusculé of my fashioning that I have here in my pocket."

And they discussed Algiers, the forty-eight million in the

Bey's treasury, and a stolen thirteen million, until half-past-nine.

"And Madame Grandet?" M. Leuwen enquired.

"I had completely forgotten her. . . ."

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THERE WAS NOTHING but business for Lucien that day from the beginning to the end; for he hastened to Madame Grandet's in the evening as he would have gone to his office to keep a belated appointment. Lightly he crossed the courtyard, mounted the stairs, went through the antechamber, smiling all the time at the simplicity of the venture he was about to engage in. He knew the same pleasure he might have felt at recovering some document that had disappeared at the moment he wanted to attach it to a report for the King.

He found Madame Grandet surrounded by her faithful admirers, and suddenly distaste extinguished his youthful smile. The gentlemen were arguing: a M. Greslin, who was Referendary at the Court of Accounts (thanks to twelve thousand francs presented to the cousin of the mistress of the Comte de Vaize), questioned whether the corner grocer, M. Béransville, who was purveyor to the General Staff of the National Guard, would dare displease such *good customers* by voting in accordance with his newspaper. One of the other gentlemen, a Jesuit before 1830 and now a Lieutenant of Grenadiers, and decorated, had just offered the information that one of Béransville's clerks subscribed to the *National*, a thing he certainly would never have dared to do if his employer had had a proper horror of that rhapsodical and disruptive republican sheet.

With each word, Madame Grandet's beauty perceptibly faded in Lucien's estimation. And the worst of it was that she was taking a very active part in a discussion which would not have been out of place in a porter's lodge. She voted that the grocer be indirectly threatened with loss of patronage by the Drum-Major of the company of Grenadiers, whom she knew very well.

"Instead of enjoying their enviable position," Lucien thought, "these people waste their time *being afraid*, like my friends, the nobles of Nancy, and, furthermore, they make me sick at my stomach."

Lucien was leagues away from that youthful smile with which he had entered the magnificent drawing room, now transformed into a porter's lodge.

"I am sure that the conversation of the young ladies of the Opera is less vulgar. What a curious age! These Frenchmen who are normally so brave, as soon as they become rich spend their lives being afraid. But perhaps these noble souls of the *Juste-milieu* are incapable of serenity as long as any possibility of danger exists in the world."

And he stopped listening to them. It was only then that he noticed that Madame Grandet was receiving him very coolly; this amused him.

"I thought," he said to himself, "that I would remain in favor for at least a couple of weeks. But it doesn't take that long for this featherbrain to tire of an idea."

This brisk and breezy reasoning of Lucien's would have seemed pretty ridiculous to any politician. It was he who was the featherbrain: he had failed to divine Madame Grandet's character. This woman, so fresh, so young, and apparently so taken up with the frescoes of her summer gallery, copies of those of Pompeii, was almost constantly engrossed in the most profound political calculations. She was as rich as a Rothschild and longed to be a Montmorency!

"This young Leuwen, Master of Petitions, is not bad. If half of his real merit could be exchanged for an inherited position in the world, a position no one could dispute, he would be good for something in society. Just as he is, with that simplicity amounting almost to naïveté, yet not lacking in nobility by any means, he would suit to perfection one of those little women who look for gallantry, and not for a distinguished position in society."

And she was quite horrified by this vulgar way of thinking.

"He has no name. He is an insignificant young man, the son of a rich banker who has acquired the reputation of being clever because he has a malicious tongue. But his father is nothing but a beginner in the career in which M. Grandet has advanced so far. He is without a name or a family solidly established in society. It is not in his power to add anything to my position. Every time he is invited to the Tuileries I shall also be invited, and before he is. He has never yet had the honor of being invited to dance with the Princesses."

Such were Madame Grandet's thoughts as she studied Lucien, who all the time believed her to be entirely engrossed by the question of the crimes of the corner grocer and the means of punishing him by withdrawing the patronage of the General Staff of the National Guard.

Suddenly Madame Grandet laughed to herself, something very unusual for her.

"If, as Madame de Thérmines so generously believes, he has such a passion for me, the thing to do is to drive him completely mad. And I believe, to begin with, harsh treatment would best suit this handsome young man, and it will certainly suit me very well."

At the end of half an hour, seeing that he was really being treated with marked coolness, Lucien found himself, in regard to the beautiful Madame Grandet, in the same position as a connoisseur who is bargaining for a mediocre painting;

as long as he thinks he can have it for a few louis he exaggerates its beauties; but if the salesman sets an exorbitant value on it, the painting begins to seem absurd to him, he finds nothing but flaws in it and thinks only of ridiculing it.

"I am here," Lucien admonished himself, "to make plain to fools that I am hopelessly in love. Let's see, what does one do when one is consumed by such a passion and has been badly received by so pretty a woman? Naturally one sinks into a melancholy silence."

And he didn't utter another word.

"How well the world understands passion!" he thought, smiling to himself and becoming really melancholy. "When I was actually in the state I am now assuming, no one was noisier than I at the Café Charpentier!"

Lucien remained seated on his chair in the most praiseworthy immobility. Unhappily he could not shut his ears.

About ten o'clock M. de Torpet, an ex-Deputy, a very handsome young man, and the eloquent editor of a government newspaper, arrived.

"Have you read the *Messenger*, Madam?" he said, coming up to the mistress of the house with a vulgar and almost familiar air, as though showing off his intimacy with this young society woman who was so much talked about. "Have you read the *Messenger*? They won't be able to find a reply to those few lines I launched this morning on the latest crazy idea of the reformists. In a few brief words I dealt with the question of the increase in the number of voters. England has eight hundred thousand, and we have a hundred eighty thousand. But if I take a quick glance at England, what is it that strikes me first of all, what pre-eminently and startlingly meets my eye? A powerful and respected aristocracy, an aristocracy which has its roots deep in the customs of that supremely serious people; serious because they are a Biblical people. And on this side of the Channel what do I see? People who have

wealth and nothing more! Perhaps in two years the heirs to their wealth and to their names will be in Sainte-Pélagie. . . .”

Addressed to a rich bourgeois woman whose grandfather had certainly not kept a carriage, this discourse amused Lucien for a while. Unfortunately, M. de Torpet did not have the wit to be witty in a few words, he required endless periods.

“This impudent Gascon thinks it incumbent on him to talk like M. de Chateaubriand’s books,” thought Lucien impatiently. He put in two or three little remarks himself, which, had they been carefully explained to this audience, might have been considered amusing. But he quickly cut himself short. “I am forgetting that I am hopelessly in love. Silence and sadness are the only fitting attitudes to assume, after the reception Madame Grandet has given me tonight.”

Reduced to silence, Lucien heard so many stupidities and, above all, witnessed the proud display of so many base sentiments that he had the feeling that he was in his father’s servants’ hall.

“When my mother finds her lackeys talking like M. de Torpet, she dismisses them.”

He began to feel a distinct dislike for all the elegant appointments of Madame Grandet’s little oval drawing room. He was wrong: nothing could have been more charming and less theatrical; if it had not been for the oval form and some of the gay ornaments skillfully placed there by the architect, this delicious little drawing room would have been a perfect temple; artists would have agreed, “It borders on the solemn.” But the impudence of M. de Torpet spoiled everything for Lucien. The youth, the freshness of the mistress of the house, although somewhat enhanced for him by her cool reception, seemed that of a chambermaid.

Lucien continued to think of himself as a philosopher, and failed to see that it was simply a question of not being able to stand effrontery. This attribute, so indispensable to success and



carried to the extreme by M. de Torpet, filled him with a loathing that came very near to anger. This loathing for so necessary an attribute was the symptom which alarmed M. Leuwen about his son.

"He is not made for this age," Lucien's father used to say to himself, "and will never be anything but an insignificant man of merit."

When the inevitable pool at billiards was suggested, Lucien saw that M. de Torpet was disposed to take a ball. Lucien's ears were really offended by the loud voice of this handsome man. His disgust was so great that he felt incapable of dancing attendance at the billiard table and silently took his leave, but remembering to walk with dragging steps as befitted his sorrow.

"It is only eleven o'clock," he said with delight, and for the first time that season hastened toward the Opera with pleasure at the thought of arriving.

He found Mademoiselle Raimonde in his father's latticed box. She had been alone for the last quarter of an hour and was dying to talk to someone. Lucien listened to her with unmistakable pleasure which surprised her. He was altogether charming to her.

"She has real wit," he said to himself in his state of infatuation. "What a contrast to the slow, monotonous pomposity of the Grandet drawing room!"

"You are charming, my lovely Raimonde, or at least I am charmed. Now tell me all about the dispute between Madame — and her husband, and about the duel."

While Raimonde's soft little voice, that was as clear as a bell, went flitting from one detail of her story to another, Lucien's thoughts were still occupied with the scene he had just left.

"How heavy and sad those people are, exchanging their specious arguments which both listener and speaker know to

be false! But it would shock all the proprieties of that confraternity not to exchange this counterfeit money of theirs. One has to swallow I don't know how many imbecilities, but never laugh at the fundamental verities of their religion, or all is lost." He then surprised his companion by interrupting her chatter to say:

"In your company, my lovely Raimonde, a Torpet would be impossible."

"Where have you come from?" she asked.

"With your impetuous, fearless disposition, it wouldn't take you long to make a fool of him, you would tear his grandiloquence to tatters. . . . What a pity I can't have you both to lunch together! My father would deserve to be present at such a luncheon. Never could your lively spirit endure that man's long pompous periods, which are in perfect keeping with the manners of the provinces."

Our hero fell silent.

"Perhaps," he thought, "I should transfer my consuming passion from Madame Grandet to Mademoiselle Elssler or Mademoiselle Gosselin? They, too, are very famous; neither Mademoiselle Elssler nor Mademoiselle Gosselin has the wit nor the unexpectedness of Mademoiselle Raimonde, but at least at Mademoiselle Gosselin's, a Torpet would be impossible. And that is why society in France has fallen into decadence. We have reached the age of Seneca; we no longer dare act or speak as in the time of Madame de Sévigné and the great Condé. Spontaneity has taken refuge in the corps-de-ballet. I wonder which would be less troublesome as the object of my hopeless passion, Madame Grandet or Mademoiselle Gosselin? Am I really to be condemned to write inanities all morning and to listen to them all evening?"

In the midst of this self-examination, while Lucien half-listened to Mademoiselle Raimonde's foolish chatter, the door

of the box burst open, giving entrance to no less a personage than His Excellency, M. le Comte de Vaize.

"I have been looking for you," he said to Lucien in a solemn tone, not without a touch of self-importance. "I must talk to you! But . . . this young lady . . . can she be trusted?"

Although he had lowered his voice, Mademoiselle Raimonde caught his words.

"That is a question no one has ever asked without regretting it," she cried. "And since I can't ask Your Excellency to get out, I'll postpone my revenge till the next session of the Chamber." And she disappeared.

"Not bad," said Lucien, laughing. "Really not bad at all."

"But how can anyone be so frivolous, engaged, as you are, in affairs of such importance?" the Minister exclaimed with the ill humor of a man beset by grave difficulties who sees himself put off with a jest.

"I have sold myself body and soul to Your Excellency during the day, but it is now eleven o'clock at night and, by gad, my evenings are my own. But," he continued jokingly, "what am I offered for them?"

"I will make you a Lieutenant instead of a Second-Lieutenant."

"Alas! A very pretty offer, but I wouldn't know what to do with it."

"There will come a time when you will appreciate its full value. Can you lock this box?"

"Nothing could be easier," replied Lucien, bolting the door.

Meanwhile the Minister looked to see if people in the adjoining box could hear them. It was empty. His Excellency was careful to hide behind a column.

"Entirely through your own merit you have become my aide-de-camp," he began with an air of gravity. "The office you hold was nothing, and my only reason for placing you there was to please your father. You have created the office

yourself, it is at present not without importance, and I have just spoken of you to the King."

He paused, expecting this last declaration to have a great effect. He looked at Lucien intently and found nothing but a somewhat listless attention.

"Unhappy monarchy!" he thought. "The name *King* has been shorn of all its magical effect. It is really impossible to govern with all these little newspapers demolishing everything. We have to pay everything in cash or preferments. . . . And it is ruining us: the Treasury is not infinite, nor preferments either."

There followed a little silence of ten seconds during which the Minister's face took on a somber expression. In his early youth at Coblenz, the four letters KING had still produced an effect.

"Is he about to make some proposition like the Caron affair?" Lucien wondered. "In that case, the army will never have a Lieutenant by the name of Leuwen."

"My friend," said the Minister finally, "the King approves my sending you on this double electoral mission."

("Elections again!" thought Lucien. "Tonight I am like M. de Pourceaugnac.")

"Your Excellency," he rejoined firmly, "is not ignorant of the fact that such missions are not looked upon by a disabused public as altogether honorable."

"That is what I am far from admitting," the Minister replied. "And, allow me to add, I have had more experience than you."

This last was said with an air of self-complacency in the worst possible taste, nor was the retort slow in coming:

"And I, M. le Comte, have less interest in power, and beg Your Excellency to confide such missions to someone more worthy than myself."

"But, my friend," the Minister replied, trying to restrain

his ministerial vanity, "it is one of the duties of your office, that office which you have succeeded in making something of . . ."

"In that case I have a second request to add to my first, that of asking you to accept my resignation, together with my thanks for all your kindness to me."

"Unhappy monarchical principle!" the Minister said almost to himself.

As it did not suit him to part either with Lucien or his father he added in the most courteous tone:

"Permit me to say, my dear sir, that the question of your resignation can only be discussed with M. Leuwen, your father."

"I should be happy not always to have recourse to my father's talents. If Your Excellency would be good enough to explain these missions to me, and if there is no danger of a Rue Transnonain at the end of the affair, I might accept them."

"I deplore no less than you the terrible accidents that can happen in the precipitate use of even perfectly legitimate force. But you must surely feel that an accident, deplored and rectified as far as was possible, proves nothing against a system. Is a man who shoots his friend while hunting, a murderer?"

"M. de Torpet talked to us for an endless half hour this evening about such misadventures, exaggerated by a wicked press."

"Torpet is a fool, and it is because we haven't a Leuwen, and the others are wanting in flexibility, that we are forced to use a Torpet. For, after all, the machine must function. The arguments and torrents of eloquence, for which these gentlemen are paid, are not intended for intelligences such as yours. But in a large army you cannot expect all the soldiers to be marvels of delicacy."

"But who will guarantee that another Minister will not employ in my honor the same terms Your Excellency has used in your panegyric of M. de Torpet?"

"Really, my friend, you *are* intractable!"

This was said so naturally and so good-naturedly, and Lucien was still so young, that this tone brought a response:

"No, M. le Comte. Indeed, in order not to disappoint my father, I am ready to accept your missions provided there is no bloodshed at the end of them."

"But do you really suppose we have the power to shed blood?" the Minister exclaimed in a very different tone of voice and with something like reproach, and even regret.

This remark coming from the heart struck Lucien.

"What a perfect inquisitor," he thought.

"The object of your mission is twofold," the Minister continued, assuming an altogether official tone, and at the same time thinking to himself: "I shall have to watch my words so as not to offend our young Leuwen. And this is what we are reduced to with *our inferiors* today. If we find one who is deferential he is untrustworthy, ready to sell us to the *National* or to Henri V."

"As I say, your mission is twofold, my dear aide-de-camp," he continued out loud. "First of all you must put in an appearance at Champagnier in the Cher, where your father has large estates, talk to your father's agents and, with their assistance, try to find out what makes M. Blondeau's nomination so uncertain. The Prefect, M. de Riquebourg, is a worthy man, pious and completely devoted, but he seems to me to be an imbecile. You will have letters to him. You will have money to distribute on the banks of the Loire and, in addition, three tobacco concessions. I think there will also be two post-office directorships. The Minister of Finance has not yet replied on the subject, but I shall inform you later by telegraph. In addition you may remove from office just about anyone you

choose. You are intelligent and will make use of all your powers with discretion. Conciliate the ancient nobility and the clergy: the life of a child is all that stands between them and us. No mercy for the republicans, especially for those young men who have received a good education and who do not have one penny to their names. Not all of them are in Mont-Saint-Michel. You know how my departments are honeycombed with spies, so you will address all important communications to your father.

"But Champagnier does not worry me inordinately. M. Malot, the liberal rival of Blondeau, is a braggart, a swaggerer, but no longer young, and he has had himself painted in the uniform of a Captain of the National Guard complete with bearskin on his head. He is not a man on the stern and energetic side. To play a good joke on him, I suppressed his Guard a week after he was made Captain. Such a man cannot be indifferent to a red ribbon that will make a fine effect in the portrait. In any case, he is an imprudent, fatuous boaster who, in the Chamber, would do his party more harm than good. You must study the means of winning Malot over, in the event of the failure of the faithful Blondeau.

"The crucial point, however, is Caen in the Calvados. You will give a day or two to the business of Champagnier, and then get on to Caen with all possible dispatch. At any cost, M. Mairobert must not be elected. He has both intelligence and wit. With a dozen or more heads like that, the Chamber would become unmanageable. I give you practically *carte blanche* in the matter of money, as well as offices to be given and taken away. Only, in the latter case, there might be some objections from two Peers belonging to us who are great landowners in that region. In any case, the Chamber of Peers is not troublesome, but I don't want M. Mairobert under any consideration. He is rich, he has no poor relations, and he already has the Cross. So there is no way of getting at him.

"The Prefect of Caen, M. Boucaut de Séranville, is rabid with all the zeal you lack. He himself has written a pamphlet against M. Mairobert, and has been rash enough to have it printed down there, right in the county-seat of his Prefecture. I have just issued an order to be sent to him by tomorrow's telegraph, not to distribute a single copy. Since M. Mairobert has public opinion in his favor, it is through that means we must attack him. M. de Torpet has also written a pamphlet. You will take three hundred copies with you in your carriage. Two more pamphlets by our regular writers, MM. D—— and F——, will be ready at midnight. All this is of very little value but costs a great deal. M. D——'s pamphlet, which is insulting and sarcastic, cost me six hundred francs; the other, which, according to the author, is subtle, ingenious and in good taste, cost me fifty louis. You will distribute either one or both of these pamphlets according to circumstances. The Normans are very canny. In short, you are at liberty to distribute or not to distribute them. If you care to write one yourself, either an entirely new one or adapted from the others, you would be doing me a great service. In a word, do anything on earth to prevent the election of M. Mairobert. Write me twice a day, and I give you my word that I will read your letters to the King."

Lucien smiled.

"An anachronism, M. le Comte. We are no longer living in the days of Samuel Bernard. What can the King do for me in a concrete way? As for distinctions, M. de Torpet dines once or twice a week with Their Majesties. No, really, your monarchy is lacking in rewards, bribes and means of seduction."

"Not so lacking as you think. If, in spite of your good and loyal services, M. Mairobert is elected, you will be made a Lieutenant. If he is not elected you will be made a Lieutenant of the General Staff, with the ribbon."



"M. de Torpet did not neglect to inform us this evening that he had been made an Officer of the Legion of Honor a week ago, apparently because of his long article on the houses demolished by cannon-fire at Lyons. Moreover, I remember the advice given by Marshal Bournonville to the King of Spain, Ferdinand VII. It is now midnight; I shall leave at two o'clock in the morning."

"Bravo, bravo, my friend! Write out your instructions in the way I have suggested and your letters to the Prefects and Generals. I will sign everything at one-thirty before going to bed. I shall probably have to be up the whole night again because of these infernal elections. So don't be afraid of disturbing me. Then, too, you will always have the telegraph."

"Does that mean that I can send you messages without showing them to the Prefects?"

"To be sure! In any case, they will always be kept informed by the telegraph operator. But it would be wise not to offend the Prefects. If they are good sorts tell them only as much as you see fit. If they seem inclined to view your mission with a jealous eye, try not to provoke them: we must not divide our army on the eve of battle."

"I shall try to act with all prudence," Lucien said, "but, in plain words, am I to telegraph Your Excellency without communicating my dispatch to the Prefect?"

"Yes, I agree, but don't quarrel with the Prefects. I wish you were fifty years old instead of twenty-four."

"Your Excellency is certainly free to choose a man of fifty who would be less susceptible, perhaps, to the insults of the press."

"You shall have all the money you need. If your pride will allow me the satisfaction, you shall have that and more. In a word, we must succeed. My private opinion is that it is better to spend five hundred thousand francs than to be faced with Mairobert in the Chamber. He is tenacious, wise, respected—

a terrible man. He despises money, of which he has a great deal. In short, we couldn't have anyone worse."

"I shall do my best to save you from him," Lucien coldly replied.

The Minister rose and, followed by Lucien, left the box. He had to return at least fifty bows and shake eight or nine hands before reaching his carriage. He invited Lucien to get in with him.

"Handle this as well as you did the Kortis affair," he said to Lucien, whom he insisted on taking to the Place de la Madeleine, "and I shall tell the King that his government has no subject superior to you. And you are not yet twenty-five. There is nothing you cannot aspire to. I see only two obstacles: will you have the courage to speak before four hundred Deputies of whom three hundred are imbeciles? And can you control that first impulse which in you is so terrible? Above all, let it be understood, and make the Prefects understand, that you must never appeal to those so-called magnanimous sentiments so closely allied to mass insurrection."

"Ah!" Lucien painfully ejaculated.

"What is the trouble?"

"It doesn't sound very alluring."

"Remember that your Napoleon, even in 1814 when the enemy had crossed the Rhine, would have none of them."

"May I take M. Coffe with me? He has enough sang-froid for two."

"But then I should be left with no one!"

"With only four hundred clerks! What about M. Desbacs, for example?"

"He's a little schemer, far too ingratiating, who will betray more than one Minister before he gets to be a Councilor of State. And I shall do my best not to be one of those Ministers. That is why, despite all your asperity, I call upon your aid. Desbacs is your exact opposite. . . . However, take with you

whomever you please, even M. Coffe. No Mairobert at any price! I shall expect you within an hour and a half. Ah! youth, with all its activity! What a happy time!"

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LUCIEN went to say good-by to his mother. He was given the traveling calash of his father's banking house, which was always in readiness, and at three o'clock in the morning was on his way toward the Department of the Cher.

The carriage was piled high with election pamphlets. They were everywhere, even on the roof; there was scarcely any room left for Lucien and Coffe. At six o'clock in the evening they reached Blois, and stopped for dinner. While they were eating they heard a terrific commotion in front of the inn.

"Apparently someone is being hooted," Lucien remarked.

"To hell with them!" returned Coffe coolly.

The host came in looking deathly pale.

"You must fly, sirs! They are going to rifle your carriage."

"And what for?"

"Ah, you ought to know that better than I."

"What do you mean?" cried Lucien, furious. Quickly he left the inn parlor, which was on the ground floor, followed by Coffe. He was greeted by deafening shouts of:

"Down with the spy! Down with the police informer!"

Crimson with fury, Lucien decided not to answer them, and went straight to his carriage. The crowd gave way a little. As he opened the door an enormous handful of mud hit him in the face and splashed over his cravat. Some even went into his mouth, for he was speaking to Coffe at the moment.

A burly lackey with red side-whiskers, supposed to look after the travelers at the inn, was calmly smoking on a first-story balcony directly overlooking the scene. He shouted down to the mob:

"Look how dirty he is! You've put his soul on his face."

This remark was greeted with a little silence, followed by a great shout of laughter that spread along the street with a deafening roar, and lasted for fully five minutes.

Lucien turned brusquely, and looking up at the balcony tried to make out, among all those jeering faces, the insolent fellow who had insulted him. Two gendarmes came galloping down upon the crowd. The balcony emptied in the twinkling of an eye, and the crowd scattered down all the side streets. Beside himself with anger, Lucien started to enter the inn to find the man who had insulted him, but the innkeeper had barricaded all the doors, and it was in vain that our hero pounded on them furiously with fists and boots. During these frantic efforts the Brigadier of the gendarmes was standing behind him.

"You'd better be off, and in a hurry," this functionary said, laughing openly at the sad state of Lucien's waistcoat and cravat. "I have only three men, and that mob may come back with stones."

In all haste the horses were brought out and put into the shafts. Wild with rage, Lucien kept talking to Coffe who did not reply but, with the aid of a large kitchen knife, went on scraping off some of the foul mud that covered his sleeves.

"I must find that lout who insulted me," repeated Lucien for the fifth or sixth time.

"In the trade we follow, you and I," Coffe said at length with perfect composure, "there's nothing we can do but shake our ears and go on."

The innkeeper came up to them. He had left the inn by a

back door, and refused to give Lucien the name of the man who had insulted him.

"You'd do well just to pay me what you owe me. It's forty-two francs."

"Are you joking? A dinner for two, forty-two francs!"

"I advise you to be off," the Brigadier put in. "They will soon be back with rotten cabbages."

And Lucien noticed that the innkeeper threw the officer a grateful look.

"But how can you have the audacity . . . !" Lucien cried.

"All right then, go to the Justice of the Peace if you think you're the injured party," the innkeeper said with all the insolent assurance of a man of his class. "All my guests have been terrorized. There's an Englishman inside with his wife who has taken half of my first floor for two months. He says if I am going to receive in my house such . . ."

The innkeeper stopped short.

"Such what?" Lucien cried, pale with anger and starting toward his carriage for his sword.

"You understand me, don't you? The Englishman has threatened to leave."

"Let's go," said Coffe. "Look, they're coming back."

Lucien tossed the innkeeper forty-two francs, and the carriage started.

"I shall wait for you outside the city limits," he said to the Brigadier. "I order you to join me there."

"Ah, I understand," the Brigadier said, smiling scornfully, "our emissary is frightened."

"I order you to take a different street from the one we take and to wait for me outside the city gate. And you," he said to the postilion, "I order you to go through the crowd at a walk."

People began to gather again at the end of the street. When he got to within twenty feet of them, the postilion put his horses to a gallop in spite of Lucien's furious protestations.

Mud and cabbages came flying into the calash from all directions, and despite the hullabaloo, our gentlemen had the pleasure of hearing all the filthy insults shouted after them.

Nearing the city gate, the horses had to slow down to cross a narrow bridge. There were eight or ten brawlers standing right under the vault of the double gate.

"Duck him! Duck him!" they shouted.

"Why, that's Lieutenant Leuwen," said a man in a torn green military coat—apparently a discharged Lancer.

"Leuwen, Leuwen, let's duck Leuwen!" they started yelling in chorus.

They kept on yelling as the calash passed under the gateway not two steps away from them, and their cries redoubled as soon as the calash was six paces outside the gate. Two hundred paces farther along everything was calm. The Brigadier soon arrived.

"I congratulate you, gentlemen," he said to the travelers. "You had a narrow escape."

His jeering manner put the finishing touch to Lucien's anger. He was beside himself. He told the gendarme to examine his passport.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he asked.

"Eh, my dear sir, you know that better than I do. You are the Police Commissioner down for the elections. All those printed papers of yours fell off the roof of your carriage as you were coming into town just opposite the Café Ramblin—it is the Café *National*. They read your papers, you were recognized, and it's a mighty lucky thing for you that there weren't any loose stones lying about."

M. Coffe quietly climbed onto the front seat of the calash.

"It's true, there's nothing left," he said, peering over the roof of the carriage.

"And this lost package of pamphlets—was it the one for the Cher or the one on M. Mairobert?" Lucien asked him.

"It was the attack on M. Mairobert," Coffe answered. "It was Torpet's masterpiece."

The gendarme's expression during this conversation infuriated Lucien. He gave him twenty francs and dismissed him. The Brigadier was profuse in his thanks.

"Gentlemen," he added, "the inhabitants of Blois are hot-headed. Generally gentlemen like you go through the town at night."

"Will you be gone!" Lucien cried; then, turning to the postilion, "Make your horses gallop as fast as they can go!"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid," the latter replied, grinning. "There's no one on the road."

After galloping for five minutes:

"Well, Coffe?" Lucien said, turning to his companion.

"Well!" coldly replied Coffe. "The Minister takes your arm when you leave the Opera, all the other Masters of Petitions, the Prefects on leave, the Deputies with their tobacco concessions, envy you. This is the other side of the medal. It's very simple."

"Your coolness will drive me mad," Lucien cried, drunk with anger. "All these indignities! That atrocious remark: 'His soul is on his face!' That mud!"

"That mud," Coffe replied, "is for us the noble dust of the field of honor; that public hooting will count in your favor. They are shining deeds in the career you have chosen and in which my poverty and my gratitude have caused me to follow you."

"You mean that if you had an income of twelve hundred francs you would not be here."

"If I had an income of three hundred francs I would not work for a Ministry that holds thousands of poor devils in the horrible dungeons of Mont-Saint-Michel and Clairvaux."

A profound silence followed this too candid reply, and lasted for the next three leagues. About six hundred paces out-

side a village whose steeple could be seen rising above a barren treeless hill, Lucien called to the postilion to stop.

"There will be twenty francs for you," he said to him, "if you don't mention what has happened."

"Twenty francs! Well, well, that's fine, and I thank you. But you know, Master, with that face of yours still so pale from fright, and your beautiful English calash all covered with mud, people are bound to think it funny and begin to gossip. But it won't be me that does the talking."

"Say that our carriage was overturned, and tell the people at the post that there are twenty francs for them if they change horses in three minutes. Say that we are merchants in a great hurry because of a bankruptcy." And turning to Coffe: "To think that we should be forced to dissimulate like this!"

"Do you want to be recognized, or don't you?"

"I'd like to be a hundred feet under the ground, or else to have your imperturbability."

Lucien did not say another word while the horses were being changed. He sat motionless in the back of the calash, one hand on his pistols, dying, it was quite plain, of rage and shame.

When they were five hundred yards away from the next relay:

"What do you advise me to do, Coffe?" he asked, turning to his taciturn companion with tears in his eyes. "I want to send in my resignation and transfer my mission to you, or if that doesn't suit you, I shall send for M. Desbacs. I'll wait eight days and then go back to look for that insolent lout at Blois."

"I advise you," Coffe coldly rejoined, "to have your carriage washed at the next post, to go on as if nothing had happened, and never to breathe a word of this affair to a soul, for everybody would laugh."

"What!" cried Lucien. "You want me, for the rest of my



life, to put up with the idea that someone has insulted me with impunity?"

"If you are too thin-skinned to stomach contempt, why did you leave Paris?"

"I shall never forget that quarter of an hour we spent outside the inn! For the rest of my life that quarter of an hour will be a red-hot brand on my breast."

"What makes the adventure particularly galling," Coffe remarked, "is that there was never for a moment the slightest danger. We had ample time to relish the crowd's contempt to the full. The street had plenty of mud but was perfectly paved, not a single loose stone available. It is the first time I've known what it feels like to be despised. When I was arrested and about to be taken to Sainte-Pélagie, only three or four people saw what was going on. As I got into the cab, with some little assistance, one of them said with sympathy and pity: *Poor devil!*"

Lucien did not reply, and Coffe continued to think aloud with cruel frankness.

"But back there at the inn—that was unmitigated scorn. It made me think of the old saying: You swallow scorn but you don't chew it."

Coffe's coolness drove Lucien wild. If he hadn't been restrained by the thought of his mother, he would have deserted then and there on the highroad and would have had himself driven to Rochefort. From there it would be a simple matter to embark, under an assumed name, for America.

"At the end of two years I can come back to Blois and insult the most prominent young man of the town."

This temptation was too strong in him: he had to talk about it.

"My friend," he said to Coffe, "I trust you never to laugh at my anguish with anyone."

"You saved me from Sainte-Pélagie where I would have

had to do my five years—besides, we've known each other a good long time."

"Well, my heart is overflowing, I have to talk, and I shall confide in you if you will promise eternal silence."

"I'll promise you that."

Lucien explained his whole scheme of desertion and finished by bursting into tears.

"I've managed my whole life badly," he kept repeating. "I'm in an inextricable mess."

"That may be," Coffe answered him, "but no matter what your reasons are, you can't desert in the middle of the battle, like the Saxons at Leipzig. It would be odious, and afterwards you'd be filled with remorse, or at least, I'm afraid you would. Try to forget the whole thing and, above all, not a word to M. de Riquebourg, the Prefect of Champagner."

After this fine bit of consolation, a silence followed that lasted for two hours. There was a stage of six leagues to be covered. It was cold. It was raining. The calash had to be closed. It was beginning to get dark. They were driving through a flat and barren country without a single tree. During the last part of this endless relay of six leagues total darkness fell. Coffe could feel Lucien changing his position every five minutes.

"He is writhing like Saint Lawrence on his bed of coals. . . . It's too bad he can't find some way out for himself . . ." and a half hour later he added: "A man in that state is not very polite. . . ." Then after another half hour of cogitations and mathematical deductions he continued to himself: "Nevertheless, I owe him my gratitude for having got me out of that cell at Sainte-Pélagie which was about as big as this calash. . . . So, let's risk an angry retort. He wasn't any too civil in our preceding conversation but anyway let's endure the boredom of talking, and talking to an unhappy man and, even worse, to a handsome son of Paris unhappy through his own fault, un-

happy despite health, wealth and youth to spare. What a fool! How I could hate him! But he saved me from Sainte-Pélagie! At Polytechnique what a puppy, and above all what a wind-bag: talk, talk, talk, nothing but talk! . . . Still, and it's a famous point *in his favor*, never an offensive word when he took the notion of getting me out of Sainte-Pélagie. . . . Yes, but only to make an executioner's apprentice of me. A real hangman is less objectionable. . . . People's horror of executioners is pure childishness, due to their usual stupidity. After all, he does a job . . . a necessary job . . . indispensable. . . . But what of us? We who are on the road to all the honors that society can offer, we are also on the way to commit infamy . . . *pernicious* infamies. The people, who are usually wrong, by some chance were right this time. . . . In this handsome and very comfortable English calash they discover two infamous wretches . . . and say to us: 'You are infamous wretches!' Quite true," thought Coffe, smiling. "But wait a moment, they didn't say to Leuwen: 'You are an infamous wretch,' but they said to both of us: 'You are infamous wretches!'"

And Coffe weighed their words on his own account. At that moment, Lucien gave a half audible sigh.

"There he is, suffering because of his absurd assumption: he actually believed he could combine the advantages of the Ministry with the delicate susceptibilities of a man of honor. What could be stupider! Eh! my friend, when you put on that embroidered coat you should have got yourself a thicker skin impervious to insults. . . . However, it must be said in his favor that there isn't another of the Minister's rascally agents who suffers in the least from the workings of the governmental machine. That somewhat absolves him. . . . The others know perfectly well what kind of missions they'll be employed in before soliciting office. . . . It would be a good thing if he could only discover the solution for himself. His pride and joy

at the discovery would somewhat attenuate the sharp pain of the conclusion as it penetrates his mind. . . . But rich and spoiled as he is by all the delights of an enviable position, the idea of a solution will never occur to him by himself . . . if solution there be. For the devil take me if I can get to the bottom of his situation. . . . That's where the devil's always to be found. That jackanapes of a Minister treats him with astonishing consideration; perhaps the Minister has a daughter, legitimate or bastard, he wants to palm off on him. . . . Or perhaps Leuwen is ambitious. He's just the man to get a Prefecture, a Cross, and to go strutting under the lindens—a red ribbon on a new dress-coat. . . .”

“Oh, God!” murmured Lucien.

“He's on the rack of public scorn . . . like me during those first days at Sainte-Pélagie when I was sure all the neighbors around my shop thought I was a fraudulent bankrupt. . . .”

The memory of that moment of bitter suffering was powerful enough to make him break the silence.

“We won't reach Caen until eleven o'clock. Do you want to go directly to the hotel or to the Prefect's?”

“If he is still up, let's see the Prefect at once.”

Lucien had the weakness of thinking aloud in front of Coffe. He was beyond shame now, since he had wept.

“I couldn't feel any worse than I do now,” he said. “And so, as a last resort, let's do our duty.”

“You are right,” Coffe replied coldly. “In extreme misfortune, particularly the worst of all misfortunes, one caused by contempt for oneself, to do one's duty is, indeed, the only resource left. *Experto crede Roberto*: my life has not been a bed of roses. If you take my advice you will just shake your ears and try to forget the outrage at Blois. You are still far from the worst that can befall a man: you have no reason to despise yourself. The most severe judge would find nothing more than imprudence in your case. You gauged the life of mem-

bers of the Ministry by what you saw in Paris, where Ministers and everyone connected with them enjoy all the pleasures society has to offer. It is only in the provinces that they are made to feel the contempt so liberally accorded them by the great majority of Frenchmen. You are not thick-skinned enough not to feel the public's scorn. But one gets used to it. All you have to do is to transfer your vanity elsewhere. Look at M. de Talleyrand. As in the case of that celebrated man—when scorn gets too commonplace it's only fools that bother giving voice to it. Thus the fools among us spoil everything, even scorn."

"That's strange consolation you offer me," retorted Lucien somewhat curtly.

"The only kind for you, it seems to me. When one undertakes the thankless task of consoling a brave man, one must first of all speak the truth. I am a surgeon, cruel only in appearance. I probe the wound deeply, but in order to cure it. You remember that story of Cardinal de Retz, a man of such intrepid spirit, and of all Frenchmen the one who has perhaps displayed the greatest courage, a man comparable to the ancients. In a moment of irritation he gave his equerry a kick in his posterior for some out-and-out stupidity, and the fellow—who happened to be stronger than he—turned on him and, with the Cardinal's own cane, gave him a very proper trouncing! Well, that is certainly more humiliating than to have mud thrown at you by a mob that believes you to be the author of the abominable pamphlet you were carrying into Normandy. Look at it the right way and you will realize that they were really throwing mud at that fatuous fool of a Torpet. If you were an Englishman this little incident would have left you quite cold. The Duke of Wellington went through the same thing four or five times in his life."

"Ah, but in the matter of honor the English are not such subtle or delicate judges as the French. The English workman

is nothing but a machine; ours may not make the heads of pins so perfectly, but he is often a sort of philosopher, and his scorn is a terrible thing to encounter."

Lucien went on talking for some time with all the weakness of a man reduced to the last degree of wretchedness. Coffe took his hand, and Lucien wept for the second time.

"And that Lancer who recognized me! They shouted: *Down with Leuwen!*"

"The soldier was simply informing the people of Blois who, as he imagined, was the author of Torpet's infamous pamphlet."

"But how can I ever get rid of the mud I'm covered with, morally as well as physically?" Lucien cried with the utmost bitterness. "Always, even as a child," he continued after a moment, "I have tried to do what I could to be useful and to merit the esteem of my fellow men. I worked ten hours a day for three years to enter the École Polytechnique. You were received with a number 4, I with a number 7. At the École, more work still, with no time for amusement. Then, indignant at the government's infamous action, we appeared on the streets. . . ."

"Ridiculous miscalculation, especially for mathematicians: we were two hundred and fifty youths, the government met us with twelve hundred peasants incapable of reasoning, but having in their veins the hot blood of Frenchmen that quickens at the first sign of danger and makes them such good soldiers. We made the same mistake as those poor Russian noblemen in 1826. . . ."

The taciturn Coffe chatted on, trying to divert Lucien's thoughts, but noticed that his companion was not listening.

"Because I was disgusted at being idle and worthless, I entered the army. I left it for private reasons, but sooner or later I should have left it anyway so as not to be forced to turn my saber against workmen. Would you have wanted me to be-

come the hero of another Rue Transnonain? It's all right for a soldier who sees in the inhabitants of the house Russians defending an enemy battery; but for me! an officer who knows . . ."

"Well, that's a lot worse, isn't it, than having mud thrown at you by the people of Blois who, at the time of the partial elections a year ago, were duped in the most flagrant fashion by their Prefect, M. de Nontour? You remember, he stationed on the bridge over the Loire gendarmes who asked all the people from the surrounding districts coming to vote in town for their passports; and as none of them had passports they were forbidden to cross. Those people at Blois saw a chance of being revenged on M. de Nontour in your person, and you must admit they were justified."

"While the calling of soldier leads to an outrage like the Rue Transnonain! Should an unhappy officer who is waiting in his regiment for a war, resign in the midst of the bullets of a riot?"

"Of course, and you were quite right to leave when you did."

"Now I am in the administration. You know that I work conscientiously from nine o'clock until four. I dispatch at least twenty affairs a day, and often very important ones. If at dinner I happen to think of something urgent I may have forgotten, instead of staying peacefully by the fire with my mother, I return to the office where I get cursed by the night watchman who doesn't expect me at such an hour. Not to disappoint my father, and also a little because of my fear of getting into an argument with him, I have let myself be involved in this execrable mission. Here I am, engaged in slandering an honest man, M. Mairobert, with all the means a government has at its disposal; I get covered with mud and am told that my dirty soul is now on my face! Oh . . ."

And Lucien writhed on his seat as he stretched his legs in the carriage.

"What am I going to do? Spend the money my father has earned, do nothing, be good for nothing? Wait around for old age, despising myself and crying: 'How happy I am to have a father who is worth more than I am'? What am I to do? What calling am I to adopt?"

"When one has the misfortune," replied Coffe, "to live under a knavish government, as well as the misfortune of thinking clearly and perceiving the truth, one sees that, under such a government, essentially unscrupulous and even worse than those of the Bourbons or Napoleon, for it is constantly betraying its word, husbandry and trade are the only independent callings. But reminding myself that husbandry would drag me fifty leagues from Paris and keep me in the middle of fields surrounded by our peasants who are still only brutes, I preferred to go into trade. It is true that in trade, due to the total lack of the commonest decency, one has to put up with and share certain frightful and sordid practices established by the barbarism of the Eighteenth Century, aided and abetted today by a set of avaricious and contemptible old men who are the plague of business. These practices are like the cruelties of the Middle Ages which were not cruelties at that time, and have become such only because of the progress of humanity. But, in spite of that, these sordid practices, even if one ends by accepting them as normal, are better than cutting the throats of peaceful citizens in the Rue Transnonain or, what is worse and even more base, justifying such things in pamphlets like these we are peddling."

"So, I suppose, I ought to change callings for the third time!"

"You still have a month to decide that. For, to desert in the middle of a battle, to embark for America at Rochefort, as you suggest, would stain your reputation with the taint of cowardly folly which you could never live down. The question is, are you a man who can despise the opinion of the society into which he was born? Lord Byron did not have strength enough,



Cardinal Richelieu himself did not have it, Napoleon, who thought himself so superior, trembled before the opinion of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In the situation in which you find yourself, one false step might lead to suicide. Remember what you told me a month ago of the hatred and the cunning of the Minister of Foreign Affairs with his forty society spies."

After having made the effort of talking for such a long time, Coffe fell silent, and a few moments later they arrived at the county seat of the Department of the Cher.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

**M**DE RIQUEBOURG, the Prefect, was alone in his study, wearing a cotton nightcap and engaged in eating an omelette at a little round table, when Lucien and Coffe were introduced.

He summoned his cook Marion, and with her discussed the contents of the larder and what could most quickly be prepared for the travelers' supper.

"These gentlemen have nineteen leagues in their bellies," he said, alluding to the distance the travelers had come since their dinner at Blois.

When the cook left, he explained:

"You see, gentlemen, it is I who attend to all our domestic arrangements with Marion. In that way my wife has only the youngsters to look after and I, by letting the girl chatter, learn everything that is going on. My conversations are entirely at the service of the police, a wise precaution, for I am surrounded by enemies. You have no idea, gentlemen, all the trouble I take. Just to give you an example: for myself I have a barber who is a liberal, and for my wife, the hairdresser of the legit-

imist ladies. Naturally I could just as well shave myself. I keep two little lawsuits going simply to provide both the public prosecutor, M. Clapier, one of the craftiest liberals we have, and the advocate, M. Le Beau, an eloquent, moderate and pious individual like the great landowners he serves, with an excuse for coming to the Prefecture. My position, gentlemen, hangs by a thread. Without His Excellency's patronage I should be the most miserable of men. My first-line enemy is Monseigneur, the Bishop; he is the most dangerous. He seems to be tied up with someone who is pretty close to the ear of Her Majesty the Queen. Monseigneur's letters never go by the post. The nobility do not deign to come to my drawing room, but keep plaguing me with their Henri V and their universal suffrage. Finally I have those miserable republicans to cope with; they are only a handful, but they make noise enough for a thousand. Will you believe me, gentlemen, the sons of the wealthiest families, by the time they are eighteen, are not ashamed to side with that party. Recently, to pay a fine of a thousand francs I had imposed on the republicans' insolent paper for having seemed to approve the charivari inflicted on the worthy substitute Receiver General, the young men of the nobility gave sixty-seven francs, and the wealthy young men not of the nobility gave eighty-nine francs. Shocking, isn't it? When they ought to be thankful to us for saving their property from the republicans!"

Bored by these endless details, at a quarter-before-midnight, Lucien said somewhat brusquely:

"Would you be good enough, sir, to read this letter from the Minister of the Interior?"

Taking his time, the Prefect read the letter through twice. The two young travelers exchanged glances.

"It's the very devil of a thing, these elections," the Prefect remarked after he had finished reading the letter for the second time. "They've kept me awake every night for the last

three weeks—though, God be praised, I'm usually asleep before my second slipper touches the floor. Why, if ever, in my zeal for the King's government, I allow myself to adopt some measure perhaps a trifle too severe for the good people under my jurisdiction, I lose all peace of mind. Just as I am about to fall asleep, suddenly remorse pricks me awake again, or, at least, a painful doubt in my own mind as to whether I should feel remorse or not. You don't yet know what it is, Monsieur le Commissaire." (This was the title the worthy M. de Riquebourg conferred on Lucien, thinking to honor him by treating him as the Commissioner of Elections.) "Your heart is young, sir, the cares of administration have never disturbed the tranquillity it enjoys. You have never found yourself in opposition to an entire population. Ah, sir, what trying moments! Afterwards one asks oneself: has my conduct been absolutely disinterested? Has my devotion to King and country been my sole guide? You, sir, have never known these painful uncertainties. For you life is still rose-colored; riding from post to post you can still be diverted by the curious shape of a cloud. . . ."

"Ah, sir, I . . ." began Lucien, forgetting all caution, all decorum, tortured by his conscience.

"Your unspoiled and tranquil youth cannot even conceive of such dangers, the mere mention of them horrifies you. And permit me to say, my young collaborator, I respect you all the more for it. Ah! keep while you can the peace of an honest heart. In office never allow yourself any act in the least questionable, I will not say in the eyes of the strictest honor, but questionable in your own eyes."

Supper had been served and our travelers were now at table.

"'You have killed sleep,' as the great English dramatist says in *Macbeth*."

"Ah! Infamy," cried Lucien to himself, "was I born to be tortured by you forever!" And although he was dying of hun-

ger he felt such a contraction of the diaphragm he could not swallow a morsel.

"But you aren't eating, Monsieur le Commissaire," exclaimed the Prefect. "You should follow the example of this gentleman, your assistant."

"*Secretary* only, sir," said Coffe, continuing to guzzle like a famished wolf.

This word, so emphatically spoken, seemed very cruel to Lucien. He could not help turning toward Coffe with a look that said, "So, you refuse to share with me the infamy of my mission?"

Coffe failed to understand. He was a man of intelligence but without delicacy. He despised delicacy as an excuse that weak people use to avoid doing the sensible thing or that which is their duty.

"Do eat, Monsieur le Commissaire. . . ."

"Master of Petitions, if you please, sir," Coffe quickly corrected him, knowing how the wretched title of Commissioner shocked Lucien, "and private secretary to His Excellency, the Minister of the Interior."

"Ah! Master of Petitions!" the Prefect exclaimed in surprise. "That, you know, is the height of ambition for us little provincial Prefects, after we've brought off two or three successful elections."

"Is this imbecile naïveté or is it malice?" Lucien wondered, little disposed to be indulgent.

"You must eat, my dear sir. If you are to grant me only thirty-six hours, as the Minister says in his letter, there are quantities of things I must tell you, all sorts of detail you should know, certain measures to be submitted—and all before tomorrow afternoon, the time set for your departure. Tomorrow my plan is to ask you to receive fifty or more persons, fifty or more doubtful or timorous officials and some undeclared enemies, or perhaps only timorous, too. Everyone's convictions will, I

am sure, be stimulated by this opportunity of talking with an official who himself talks with the Minister. Moreover this audience that you grant them, and that the whole town is certain to talk about, will be for them a solemn pledge. To be able to talk with the Minister, what an advantage, what a splendid prerogative! What can we expect from our cold dispatches which to be clear must necessarily be long? What are they compared to the vivid and interesting accounts of someone who can say: *I have seen?*"

At one o'clock in the morning these fatuous phrases were still going on. . . . Coffe, who was dying for lack of sleep, had gone to see about their beds, and the Prefect asked Lucien if he could speak freely in front of his secretary.

"Certainly, sir. M. Coffe works in the Minister's private office and, as far as these elections are concerned, has His Excellency's entire confidence."

When Coffe returned, M. de Riquebourg felt obliged to repeat all the considerations he had already laid before Lucien, now adding certain proper names. But these names, all equally unknown to our travelers, served only to make the system M. de Riquebourg proposed for influencing votes, all the more confused in their minds. Coffe, terribly annoyed at not being able to go to bed, wanted at least to get some serious work done, and with the approval of the Master of Petitions, began to ply M. de Riquebourg with questions.

This worthy Prefect, so very moral and so careful not to provide regrets for himself later on, finally admitted that the Department was most unfavorably disposed because eight Peers of France, of whom two were large landowners, had had a considerable number of petty officials appointed, who now enjoyed their protection.

"These people, sir, receive my circulars and answer me with evasions. If you had arrived two weeks sooner we could have arranged three or four salutary removals."

"But didn't you write to the Minister along these lines? I believe there was some question of the removal of a postmistress."

"Madame Durand, the sister-in-law of M. Duchadeau? Eh! poor woman! She thinks all wrong, it is true; and, if it happens in time, her removal will frighten two or three officials of the district of Tourville, one of whom is her son-in-law and the other two her cousins. But it is not there that my greatest trouble lies. It is at Mélan where, as I have had the honor of showing you on my electoral chart, we have a majority of twenty-seven votes against us."

"But, sir, I have here in my portfolio copies of your letters. If I am not mistaken, you never mentioned the district of Mélan to the Minister."

"Eh! my dear sir, how can I be expected to write such things? Doesn't M. le Comte d'Allevard, Peer of France, see your Minister every day? Aren't his letters to his notary, old Ruffe, full of the things he has heard discussed the day before, or the day before that; when he has the honor of dining with His Excellency, le Comte de Vaize? These dinners, it seems, are of frequent occurrence. One doesn't put such things in writing, my dear sir. After all I am the head of a family. Tomorrow I shall have the honor of introducing Madame de Riquebourg and our four daughters. Four daughters to be married off! And my son, who has been a sergeant with the Eighty-sixth for two years, must be made a Second-Lieutenant. To be perfectly frank, I confess—and under the seal of confession—that one word from M. d'Allevard would ruin me. And M. d'Allevard, who wants the course of the public road that now passes through his park diverted, is the protector of everybody in the district of Mélan. For me, sir, even the semi-disgrace of being transferred to another Prefecture would be my ruin. Three marriages which Madame de Riquebourg has

in prospect for our daughters would no longer be possible, and my interests here are enormous."

It was only toward two o'clock in the morning that the urgent (to use no stronger word) questions of the inflexible M. Coffe, forced the Prefect finally to reveal the grand scheme to which he had kept referring.

"It is my last resource, gentlemen, and if it is known in advance, if it is even suspected a day before the elections, all is lost! For, gentlemen, this is one of the worst Departments in France: twenty-seven subscriptions to the *National* and only eight to the *Tribune*! But to you, gentlemen, who have the Minister's ear, I can conceal nothing. So then, I must tell you that I shall wait to launch my great electoral maneuver, to spring the mine, until I see that the nomination of the chairman is almost decided; for if it is launched too soon, two hours would be enough to ruin everything: the election as well as the position of your very humble servant. Let us assume that we put up as our government candidate, M. Jean-Pierre Blondeau, an iron-master of Champagnier; and that, as our rival candidate, we shall probably—unfortunately more than probably—have M. Malot, an ex-Battalion Head and an ex-National Guardsman of Champagnier. I say *ex*, although the National Guard is only suspended, but it will be a fine day when it is re-established! M. Blondeau is a friend of the government, for he has a holy terror of a reduction of the duty on imported iron. Malot is a cloth merchant as well as a dealer in lumber and fire-wood. Malot has large accounts at Nantes. Two hours before the ballots for the nomination of chairman are counted, a business messenger, who has *actually* come from Nantes, will arrive with the alarming news that two merchants of Nantes, whom I know very well and who control a large part of Malot's fortune, are on the verge of bankruptcy, and are already transferring their property to their friends by means of antedated deeds of sale. Our Malot will straightway lose his

head and depart for Nantes, of that I am sure. He will throw up all the elections in the world. . . ."

"But how will you manage to have a real messenger from Nantes arrive at just the right moment?"

"Through the kind offices of that admirable M. Chauveau, General Secretary of Nantes and an intimate friend of mine. You see, the Nantes telegraph line is only two leagues from here, and Chauveau knows that my election begins the evening of the 23rd. He will be waiting for a word from me the evening of the 23rd or the morning of the 24th. Once the rumor reaches M. Malot about his Nantes accounts, I shall take my stand in full regalia near the Ursulines Hall where the voting is to be held. With Malot absent, I shall not hesitate to address the peasant voters and," continued M. de Riquebourg, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, "if the chairman of the electoral college is an official, even if he is a liberal, I shall launch bulletins for the benefit of my clodhopper voters on which will appear in huge letters: *Jean-Pierre Blondeau, Iron-Master*. I'll gain at least ten votes in this way. The voters, knowing that Malot is on the verge of bankruptcy . . ."

"What! Malot on the verge of bankruptcy?" said Lucien, frowning.

"Eh! after all," M. de Riquebourg replied, looking more benign than ever, "can I keep gossips in the town from exaggerating everything as usual, or from believing that, if M. Malot's correspondents are ruined, he himself will be obliged to suspend payments here? For," he continued in a firmer tone, "with what could he pay except the profits he gets for the wood he sends to Nantes?"

Coffe smiled, and could hardly keep from bursting out laughing.

"But this breach once made in M. Malot's credit by alarming those persons who have money invested with him, couldn't it *actually* force a suspension of payments?"



"Well! So much the better, by gad!" exclaimed the Prefect, completely forgetting himself. "Then I wouldn't have him on my hands at the re-election of the National Guard, should that occur."

Coffe was in the seventh heaven.

"Such success might, perhaps, shock my sensibilities . . ." he offered.

"Eh, my dear sir, republicanism rises like a flood. The dam against this torrent, which would carry off our heads and set fire to our houses, is our King. We must strengthen authority! When a city is on fire, so much the worse for the house that has to be destroyed to save all the rest! For my part, gentlemen, when the King's interest is at stake, nothing else—absolutely nothing—matters."

"Bravo, Monsieur le Préfet, a thousand times bravo! *Sic itur astra*, that is to say, on to the Council of State!"

"As for that, my dear sir, I am not sufficiently rich: twelve thousand francs and Paris would ruin me with my numerous family. The Prefecture of Bordeaux perhaps, or Marseilles, or Lyons, with a good little secret fund. Lyons for example must be really excellent. But let us return to our subject, it is getting late. So then, we count on ten votes at least that I have personally secured. My terrible Bishop has a little Grand Vicar, a sly dog with a rare taste for hard cash. If His Excellency should think fit to make some outlay, I could give twenty-five louis to M. Crochard, that is the Grand Vicar, to distribute charitably among his poor priests. You may say, sir, that to give money to the Jesuit party is to give aid to the enemy. A thing to be carefully weighed. Those twenty-five louis would give me the ten or more votes which are at M. Crochard's disposal, and twelve sooner than ten."

"This M. Crochard would take your money and then laugh at you," Lucien replied. "At the last moment his electors' consciences would prevent their voting."

"Ah! Not at all! One does not *laugh* at a Prefect," said M. de Riquebourg haughtily, very much offended by the word. "We have certain information in our files, together with seven original letters of our friend Crochard. It all has to do with a young girl in the convent of Saint-Denis-Sambuci. I swore to him that I had destroyed these letters after a little favor he had obtained for me from his Bishop at the time of the — affair . . . but our friend Crochard does not really believe it."

"Twelve votes, or at least ten?" Lucien repeated.

"That's right, sir," said the Prefect in surprise.

"I shall give you twenty-five louis."

He went over to the table and wrote out an order for six hundred francs on the Minister's Treasurer.

M. de Riquebourg's lower jaw dropped slowly and his consideration for Lucien rose with a bound. Coffe could not quite suppress a little gurgle of the glottis, as the worthy Prefect added:

"By gad, sir, that is certainly doing things up brown! Besides my general resources: circulars, traveling agents, verbal threats, with which I won't weary you, for you can't think me so incompetent as not to have pushed things already as far as possible (and I can prove all this, sir, by letters of the enemy intercepted at the post office, three of them addressed to the *National* and as detailed as official minutes, which, I assure you, ought to please the King) besides these general resources, as I say, besides the removal of M. Malot at the opening of the battle, besides M. Crochard's Jesuit votes, I have still another means of persuasion in behalf of Blondcau. This excellent man will never set the world on fire, but he sometimes knows how to follow good advice and to make timely sacrifices. He has a nephew in Paris, a lawyer and a man of letters, who has written an article for the *Ambigu*. This nephew is by no means stupid, he has received a thousand écus from his uncle

with the understanding that he will take the necessary steps to insure the continuation of the duty on iron imports. He writes articles for the papers; also, he dines with the Minister of Finance. Certain persons from here, now settled in Paris, have written him. By the first post after the departure of Malot, I shall receive a letter containing the announcement that M. Blondeau's nephew has been appointed General Secretary to the Minister of Finance. For the past week I have received a letter to that effect by every post. Now, the seventeen liberal electors (I am sure of my figures) are directly interested in the Ministry of Finance, and M. Blondeau will tell them plainly that if they vote against him his nephew will resent it.

"And will Your Excellency be good enough to glance at this memorandum of votes:

Registered electors	613
Present in the electoral college, at the most	400
Constitutional votes I can count on	178
Electors for Malot I can personally win over	10
Jesuit votes secretly controlled by M. Crochard, 12 or at least	10
Total	198

I am short two votes, but the nomination of M. Blondeau's nephew, Aristide Blondeau, to the Ministry of Finance, will give me at least six more. Majority: four votes. Moreover, my dear sir, if you will authorize me, in an emergency, to promise four removals I can assure the Minister (on my word of honor backed by a guarantee of a thousand francs deposited with a third party) a majority, not of four miserable votes, but of twelve or even eighteen. I am fortunate in that M. Blondeau is an idiot who has never offended anybody in his life. Every day he tells me that he can guarantee personally a dozen votes, but I wouldn't count on that too much. Naturally, all this comes

high, and, as the head of a family, I cannot carry on the war wholly at my own expense. In his dispatch of the 5th, marked *private*, the Minister opened a credit for me of twelve hundred francs and I have already spent over nineteen hundred. I am sure that His Excellency is too fair a man to leave me seven hundred francs out of pocket."

"If you succeed, there is no doubt about it," Lucien said. "In case of failure, however, I must tell you, sir, that my instructions do not cover such an eventuality."

M. de Riquebourg was toying absent-mindedly with the order for six hundred francs. All at once he noticed that the writing was the same as that of the letter stamped *private*, of which he had out of discretion read them only a part. From this moment his respect for the Commissioner of Elections knew no bounds.

"Not two months ago," M. de Riquebourg continued, flushing with emotion to find himself actually talking to a favorite of the Minister, "His Excellency condescended to write me a letter with his own hand on the N—— affair, to which the King attaches the greatest importance."

The Prefect opened a secret compartment of an enormous roll-top desk and took out the Minister's letter which he read aloud, afterwards handing it to his visitors.

"This," remarked Coffe, "is in Cromier's handwriting."

"What! It isn't His Excellency's?" cried the Prefect, aghast. "I have some knowledge of handwriting, gentlemen!"

And as M. de Riquebourg was not thinking about his voice, it had taken on a very sharp and sarcastic tone, half-reproachful, half-threatening.

"The true Prefect tone," Lucien thought. "There is no calling like it to ruin a man's voice. Three-quarters of the rudeness of M. de Vaize comes from his having for ten years held forth alone in the drawing room of his Prefecture."

"M. de Riquebourg," said Coffe, who, no longer sleepy, from

time to time poured himself a generous glass of white Saumur wine, "is indeed a connoisseur of handwriting. Nothing could be more like His Excellency's hand than that of young Cromier, especially when he is trying to copy it."

The Prefect offered a few objections; he felt humiliated, for these letters from His Excellency's own hand were the cornerstone of his vanity and of his hopes of advancement. He was finally convinced by Coffe who, thinking of the bankruptcy in store for the wool and wood merchant, M. Malot, had no pity for this honorable Amphytrion. The Prefect remained stunned, having been so certain that the letter was in the Minister's own hand.

"Four o'clock is striking," Coffe said. "If we prolong this session we shall never be up at nine o'clock, as Monsieur le Préfet wishes."

M. de Riquebourg took *wishes* as a reproach.

"Gentlemen," he said, rising and bowing almost to the ground, "I shall have the persons I have asked you to receive, convoked for nine-thirty. And I myself will come to your rooms promptly at ten o'clock. Until you see me appear, sleep soundly on both ears."

Despite all their protests, M. de Riquebourg insisted on personally conducting them to their rooms, which were separated by a small parlor. He even went so far in his attentions as to look under their beds.

"This man isn't so stupid after all," Coffe remarked when the Prefect had finally left them. "Look!"

And, pointing to a table on which a cold chicken, a roasted hare, wine and fruits were invitingly laid out, he began a second supper with very good appetite.

The two travelers did not separate until five o'clock in the morning.

"Leuwen seems to have forgotten the incident of Blois," Coffe thought. And indeed, like a conscientious employee, Lucien

was entirely occupied with the election of M. Blondeau, and before going to bed, once more read over the memorandum of votes M. de Riquebourg had given him at his request.

At ten o'clock sharp, M. de Riquebourg entered Lucien's bedroom, followed by the faithful Marion bearing a tray with café-au-lait, followed by a little page with another tray laden with tea, butter and a kettle of hot water.

"The water is good and hot," said the Prefect. "Jacques will light your fire. Now take your time! Have some tea or some coffee. Luncheon will be served at eleven o'clock, and a dinner for forty persons at six. Your arrival has had the happiest effect. The General is as susceptible as a fool, the Bishop is choleric and fanatical. If it meets with your approval my carriage will be waiting for you, and you can give these functionaries each ten minutes. But don't hurry: the fourteen persons whom I have summoned for your first audience have only been waiting since half-past-nine. . . ."

"I am terribly sorry," said Lucien.

"Bah!" said the Prefect. "They belong to us, they all live off the Budget. Waiting is what they were made for."

Lucien had a horror of anything that might seem to be an incivility. He dressed hurriedly, and made all haste to receive the fourteen officials. He was stunned by their ponderous stupidity and their reverential attitude toward himself.

"Were I the Prince Royal they couldn't have bowed any lower."

He was amazed when Coffe said to him later:

"You disappointed them. They think you are arrogant."

"Arrogant?"

"Naturally. You had ideas. They didn't understand you. You were much too clever for animals like them. *You spread your nets too high.* At luncheon be prepared to see some strange faces! You are going to meet the Mesdemoiselles de Riquebourg."

The reality far surpassed all expectations. Lucien had time to whisper to Coffe:

"They are grisettes who have just won forty thousand francs in the lottery."

One of them was even uglier than her sisters but not quite so impressed by the grandeur of her family. She looked a little like Théodelinde de Serpierre. This recollection had a potent effect on Lucien. As soon as he noticed the resemblance he began talking to Mademoiselle Augustine with great interest; and Madame de Riquebourg had visions of a brilliant marriage for her daughter.

The Prefect reminded Lucien of the calls he was scheduled to pay on the General and the Bishop. Madame de Riquebourg gave her husband a glance full of scornful annoyance, and, in the end, the luncheon lasted until one o'clock. Indeed, before Lucien drove away there were already four or five groups of more or less sure friends of the government installed, and carefully guarded, in different offices of the Prefecture.

Coffe had preferred not to go with his old comrade, counting on taking a stroll about town to see what it was like, but instead, he was forced to receive the official visit of Monsieur the private secretary of Messieurs the clerks of the Prefecture.

"I shall help peddle our nostrum," he said to himself. And with his withering sang-froid he succeeded in giving these clerks a lofty idea of the mission on which he was engaged.

At the end of ten minutes he dismissed them coldly, and was just escaping, in a second attempt to take a look at the town, when M. de Riquebourg, who had been lying in wait for him, pounced upon him as he passed, and forced him to listen to all the letters from the Comte de Vaize on the subject of the elections.

"They are third-rate newspaper articles," Coffe thought indignantly. "Our *Journal de Paris* wouldn't pay twelve francs

an article for them. The man's conversation is a hundred times better than his correspondence."

Just as Coffe was trying to think up an excuse to get away from M. de Riquebourg, Lucien returned, followed by the General, Comte de Beauvoir. The General was a dandy, with a fair rotund face of rare insignificance, otherwise still a good-looking man, very polite, very elegant, but who literally never understood one word of what was being said. The elections seemed to have addled his wits completely. In and out of season he kept saying: "That is a matter for the administrative authorities." From his conversation, Coffe saw that he was still mystified as to the object of Lucien's mission, in spite of the fact that the evening before the latter had sent him a letter from the Minister which could not have been more explicit.

The audiences before dinner were more and more absurd. Lucien had made the mistake of exerting himself at the morning interviews so that by two o'clock in the afternoon he was dead tired, and did not have an idea left in his head. He now became admirably correct and the Prefect began to have a very high opinion of him. During the four or five last audiences accorded to the most important personages one at a time, he was perfect, and displayed the most commendable insignificance. The Prefect insisted on Lucien's seeing the Grand Vicar, M. Crochard, a puny individual with the face of a *Penitent*, and judging by his conversation Lucien decided that he was just the man to receive twenty-five louis and to make a dozen electors vote as he directed.

All went well until dinner. At six o'clock forty-three personages, the élite of the town, assembled in the drawing room of the Prefecture. Then the great double doors opened and the Prefect was stunned to see Lucien appear without his uniform. The Prefect himself, the General and the Colonels were all in full dress uniform. Lucien, who was dying with fatigue and boredom, had been seated on Madame de Riquebourg's



right hand, making the General sulk in consequence. The government's logs had not been spared. It became insufferably hot in the room and before the dinner was half over (it lasted seven quarters of an hour) Lucien really thought he was going to faint and create a scene.

After dinner he asked permission to take a turn in the garden of the Prefecture with M. Coffe. To get rid of the Prefect, who insisted on following him, he was obliged to say:

"I have to give M. Coffe instructions about letters which I must sign before the post leaves. It is not enough to take wise measures, one must also record them."

"What a day!" the travelers exclaimed when they found themselves alone.

After a twenty-minute respite they were obliged to return to the drawing room so that Lucien might grant five or six more private interviews in the embrasures of the windows to important men—friends of the government, to be sure, but hesitant because of the hopeless nonentity of M. Blondeau, who, at table, had succeeded in exasperating even the patience of government officials of a provincial town by his eternal harping on the subject of iron and the justice of prohibiting the importation of English iron into France. Several of them, moreover, thought it ridiculous that the *Tribune* was now at its hundred and fourth lawsuit, and that so many poor young men were being held on suspicion without trial. Lucien had to consecrate his whole evening to combatting these heresies. With great eloquence he cited the case of the Greeks of the Byzantine Empire who were quarreling over the question of *increate light* on Mount Tabor while the ferocious Turks were scaling the walls of Constantinople.

Seeing the effect produced by this stroke of erudition, Lucien deserted the drawing room of the Prefecture and beckoned Coffe to follow him.

"Let's have a look at the town," these poor young men pro-

posed. A quarter of an hour later they were engaged in trying to puzzle out the architecture of a more or less Gothic church, when they were joined by M. de Riquebourg.

"I've been looking for you everywhere, gentlemen. . . ."

Lucien's patience was about exhausted.

"The courier, Monsieur le Préfet, does not go till midnight."

"Between midnight and one o'clock."

"Well, M. Coffe, you see, has such an astonishing memory that I can dictate my dispatches to him right here just as we are. He remembers everything marvelously, even corrects my repetitions and other little errors. I have so much on my mind! You have no idea of all my difficulties!"

By means of such remarks and others even more ridiculous, Lucien and Coffe finally succeeded, with great difficulty, in getting rid of M. de Riquebourg.

The two friends returned to the Prefecture at eleven o'clock and wrote the Minister a letter of twenty lines. This letter, addressed to M. Lcuwen, was promptly taken to the post by Coffe.

The Prefect was very much astonished when, at a quarter-to-twelve, his messenger came to tell him that he had been given no dispatches for Paris. His astonishment was considerably increased when the postmaster later informed him that no dispatch addressed to the Minister had been mailed. This plunged him into the deepest dismay.

At seven o'clock the next morning, the Prefect sent to ask Lucien for an audience in order to present him with his report on the removals he requested. M. de Riquebourg asked for seven, which Lucien with much effort finally persuaded him to reduce to four.

For the first time the Prefect, who until then had been humble to the point of servility, took on an intransigent tone and began talking of Lucien's responsibility. To which Lucien replied with the greatest impertinence, and ended by declining

M. de Riquebourg's invitation to a dinner for intimate friends (not more than seventeen persons) arranged for two o'clock. Lucien went to pay his respects to Madame de Riquebourg and left at noon, exactly according to the instructions which he had drawn up for himself, and without permitting the Prefect to bring up the subject again.

Happily for the travelers, their road ran over a series of hills, and, much to the horror of the postilion, they did two leagues on foot.

The frightful activity of the past thirty-six hours had succeeded in blurring the memory of the mud and the hisses of Blois. Since then the carriage had twice been washed and brushed. But on opening one of the pockets to take out M. de Vaize's itinerary, Lucien found it full of mud that was still damp, and the book ruined.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

OUR YOUNG GENTLEMEN made a detour of six leagues in order to visit the ruins of the celebrated Abbey of N—. They found them admirable and, like true students of the École Polytechnique, could not resist a desire to measure certain parts.

This was a most refreshing diversion for the travelers. All the vulgarity and platitude that had been encumbering their brains were swept away in a discussion on the suitability of Gothic art for a religion that dooms fifty-one out of every hundred children that are born to eternal damnation.

"Nothing could be stupider than our Madeleine, the church all the newspapers are so proud of. Imagine a Greek temple, made for joy and gaiety, harboring the terrible mysteries of a

religion of fear! Even St. Peter's at Rome is nothing but a brilliant absurdity today; but in 1500 when Raphael and Michael Angelo were at work there, St. Peter's was not absurd: the religion of Leo X was gay, and it was he, the Pope himself, who ordered Raphael to paint, among the decorations of his favorite gallery, the amours of Leda and the swan, repeated twenty times. St. Peter's has become absurd since Pascal's Jansenism frowned on the pleasure of loving one's sister, and since Voltaire's witticisms have resulted in a stricter observance of religious practices."

Resuming their trip, Coffe said to Lucien:

"You treat the Minister too much as a man of intelligence. You act *for his best interests*, as we say in business. But a letter of twenty lines will hardly satisfy him. In all probability he takes his entire correspondence to the King, and if your letter should be seen it would be found adequate only if it were signed Carnot or Turenne. But permit me to say, Honorable Commissioner of Elections, your name does not yet call to mind a quantity of acts of high prudence."

"Very well then, let us demonstrate just such prudence to the Minister."

So the travelers stopped off for four hours in a little town, and wrote forty pages on the subject of MM. Malot, Blondeau and de Riquebourg. The conclusion was that even without removals, M. Blondeau would have a majority of from four to eighteen votes. The decisive expedient of the bankruptcy at Nantes, invented by M. de Riquebourg, the nomination of M. Aristide Blondeau as General Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, and, finally, the Grand Vicar's twenty-five louis were all reserved for another letter to the Minister, addressed to M. M——, Rue du Cherche Midi, No. 8, whose function it was to receive such letters, and to write the ones that His Excellency desired to appear to have been written by his own hand.

"We have now proved that we are true administrators, as

that word is understood in Paris," Coffe said to his companion as they got back into their carriage.

Two hours later, in the middle of the night, they met the courier, and requested him to stop. The courier began by getting angry and insolent, but was soon begging the Special Commissioner's pardon after Coffe had acquainted him with the name of the personage transmitting the dispatches to him. All this had to be set down in an official report.

The third day at noon the travelers saw on the horizon the spires of Caen, county seat of the Department of Calvados, where the election of M. Mairobert was so much feared by the government.

"There is Caen," said Coffe.

Lucien's gaiety straightway vanished, and turning to his companion with a deep sigh: "With you, my dear Coffe, I think aloud. I have drunk the cup of humiliation to the dregs; you have seen me weep. . . . What new infamy will I be guilty of here?"

"Just keep in the background; be satisfied with seconding the Prefect's measures; don't work at the thing so seriously."

"It was a mistake to stay at the Prefecture."

"Undoubtedly, but that is just another instance of the seriousness with which you set to work, and the terrible zeal with which you press forward toward your goal."

As they approached Caen, the travelers noticed many gendarmes on the road, and certain civilians in frock coats, striding along very straight and carrying thick cudgels.

"If I am not mistaken those are the bludgeoners of the Bourse," Coffe said.

"But is it true that they really did bludgeon people at the Bourse? Wasn't it all an invention of the *Tribune*?"

"I can vouch for it, having been struck myself five or six times, and it would have ended badly for me if I hadn't happened to have a pair of large compasses which I flourished as

though I meant to eviscerate the gentlemen. Their worthy chief, M. N——, who wasn't more than ten paces away at a mezzanine window, shouted: 'Look out—that little bald man is an agitator!' I made my escape through the Rue des Colonnes."

When they reached the gates of Caen they were held up for a good ten minutes while their passports were being examined, and as Lucien was about to lose his temper, a man well past middle age, tall and broad-shouldered, who was pacing up and down under the gateway swinging a huge cudgel, told him quite plainly to go and f . . . himself.

"Sir, my name is Leuwen, Master of Petitions, and to me you are a nobody. Give me your name if you dare."

"My name is *Lustucru*," the man with the cudgel replied jeeringly, as he strutted around the carriage. "Give my name to your King's Prosecutor, Mr. Daredevil. And," lowering his voice, he added, "if ever we meet in Switzerland you'll get all the slaps in the face and marks of contempt you could ask to curry favor with your chiefs."

"Never pronounce the word honor, you spy in disguise!"

"Gad," said Coffe, almost laughing, "I'd like to have seen you insulted as I was at the Bourse."

"Instead of a pair of compasses, I have my pistols."

"You can kill this disguised gendarme with impunity. He has orders not to lose his temper. Yet, perhaps at Montmirail or Waterloo, he was a brave soldier. Today we're all in the same regiment," Coffe added with a bitter laugh. "Let's not fight."

"You are cruel," said Lucien.

"I speak the truth when I am asked, take it or leave it."

Tears filled Lucien's eyes.

The carriage was now allowed to enter the city. On reaching the inn, Lucien seized Coffe's hand:

"I am a child," he said.

"Not at all, you are simply one of the privileged class of this

age, as the preachers say, and you have never had any disagreeable work to do."

The innkeeper's reception of them was most mysterious: first, there were rooms available, then, there were no rooms to be had.

The fact was that the innkeeper had sent to advise the Prefect of their arrival. The inns, which feared provocations by the gendarmes or secret police agents, had been ordered not to have any rooms for the partisans of M. Mairobert.

Finally the Prefect, M. Boucaut de Séranville, duly authorized the innkeeper to lodge MM. Leuwen and Coffe. They had hardly reached their rooms when a very young man, exceedingly well dressed but evidently armed with pistols, appeared and, without a word, handed Lucien two copies of a little octodecimo pamphlet covered in red paper and very badly printed. It was a collection of all the ultra-liberal articles that M. Boucaut de Séranville had published in the *National*, the *Globe*, the *Courrier*, and other liberal papers in 1829.

"Not bad," said Lucien. "He writes well."

"What pomposity!" objected Coffe. "What a lifeless, vapid imitation of M. de Chateaubriand! The words are constantly being twisted out of their natural meaning, their common acceptance."

The gentlemen were again interrupted by a secret agent who, with a hypocritical smile and many questions, presented them with two more pamphlets in octavo.

"What magnificence! This is certainly taxpayers' money," said Coffe. "I'd be willing to wager they are government pamphlets."

"By gad, they're ours," cried Lucien, "the ones we lost at Blois. This is pure Torpet."

Then he turned again to the liberal articles which had formerly made the name of M. Boucaut de Séranville famous in the *Globe*.

"Come, let's go and see this renegade," Lucien proposed.

"I am not in agreement on the subject of his talents," persisted Coffe. "He no more believed in the liberal doctrines in 1829 than he believes today in the maxims of order, tranquillity, stability. Under Napoleon he would have got himself killed to be a Captain. The only advantage of the hypocrisy of those days over that of today (that of 1809 over that of 1834) is that anyone who practiced it under Napoleon could not get along without courage, which is a quality that, in wartime, does not admit of hypocrisy."

"The goal was noble and grand."

"That was only because of Napoleon. Put a Richelieu on the throne of France and de Séranville's scurviness, the zeal with which he disguises his gendarmes, would perhaps serve some useful purpose. The misfortune of these Prefects is that their profession today calls for nothing more than the qualities of a pettifogging Norman public prosecutor."

"And a pettifogging prosecutor was given sovereign power, and he sold it to his cronies."

It was in this lofty and really philosophic mood, viewing Frenchmen of the Nineteenth Century without either hate or love, and solely as the tools wielded by the possessor of the Budget, that Lucien and Coffe entered the Prefecture of Caen.

A footman dressed with a spruceness rare in the provinces, showed them into a very elegant drawing room. The walls were hung with portraits done in oil of all the members of the royal family. They would not have been out of place in the most elegant houses of Paris.

"This renegade," said Coffe, "is going to keep us waiting ten minutes. Considering your rank, his rank and his important occupations, it is mandatory."

"It so happens," rejoined Lucien, "I brought along the pamphlet made up of his liberal articles. If he keeps us waiting for



more than five minutes he will find me plunged in the perusal of his works."

The gentlemen were warming themselves in front of the fire when Lucien saw by the clock that the five minutes that any man can keep another waiting without affectation, were up. He settled himself in an armchair with his back to the door and, continuing his conversation, held the red pamphlet conspicuously in his hand.

They heard a slight noise, and Lucien became suddenly engrossed in his articles. A door opened, and Coffe, whose back was turned to the fireplace, and who was very much amused to be a witness to this meeting of two coxcombs, saw in the doorway a diminutive creature, very short, very thin and exceedingly elegant. Although it was still morning, he was already arrayed in skintight black breeches that molded perhaps the skinniest legs in the Department. At sight of the pamphlet, which Lucien returned to his pocket only four or five mortal seconds after the entrance of M. de Séranville, the latter's face took on a dark red hue, the color of wine. Coffe saw his lips contract.

Coffe found Lucien's tone cold, simple, military and a trifle quizzical.

"It's funny," thought Coffe, "what a little time it takes for a uniform to become part and parcel of the character of the Frenchman who wears it. Look at this fundamentally good-natured fellow who has been a soldier (but what a soldier!) for only ten months and now all his life his leg, and his arm, will say: 'I am a military man!' It is not surprising that the Gauls were the bravest people of antiquity. The pleasure the French take in wearing any mark of the military caste quite unsettles them, but also inspires in them two or three never-failing virtues."

During these philosophic and perhaps slightly envious reflections, for Coffe was poor and that thought was often on

his mind, Lucien and the Prefect plunged into the elections.

The little Prefect spoke slowly and with an extreme affectation of elegance. But it was evident that he was controlling himself with difficulty. When he mentioned his political adversaries his lips became pinched and his little eyes blazed.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," Coffe said to himself, "he has a murderous look. This is particularly amusing when he pronounces the word *Monsieur*—in saying *Monsieur* Mairobert, which he does every two seconds. It is highly possible that we have a little fanatic on our hands. He looks to me capable of having M. Mairobert shot if only he had him up before a nice court martial, like that of Colonel Caron. It is also possible that the sight of the red pamphlet has deeply troubled his *political* soul." (The Prefect had just said: *If I am ever a politician.*) "A fatuous fool," Coffe thought, "to be a politician. If the Cossack doesn't conquer France, our politicians will be Tom Joneses like Fox, or Blifils like Peel, and M. de Séranville will be; at most, Grand Chamberlain or Grand Referendary of the Chamber of Peers."

It was apparent that M. de Séranville was treating Lucien very coldly.

"He looks upon him as a rival," Coffe thought. "Yet this diminutive coxcomb must be at least thirty-two or -three years old. Our little Leuwen is not doing badly: admirably cold, with a tendency to a polite irony in excellent form; and the care he takes to keep his manner sufficiently distant and to avoid all fashionable sprightliness in no way distracts his attention from the ideas he has in mind."

"Would you care to let me see your election list?"

M. de Séranville plainly hesitated, and finally replied:

"I know it by heart but I have not written it down."

"Monsieur Coffe, my associate in this mission . . ."

Once more Lucien enumerated Coffe's qualities, for it

seemed to him that the Prefect accorded him too little attention.

"... M. Coffe has perhaps a pencil about him and, with your permission, will take down the figures if you are kind enough to confide them to us."

The irony of these last words was not lost on M. de Séranville. He looked really upset as Coffe, with the most provoking coolness, unscrewed the inkwell in the Russian leather case of the honorable Master of Petitions.

"Between us we have him on the rack. It's my business to keep him there as long as possible."

Arranging the writing case and then the table took at least a minute and a half. During this time Lucien maintained an admirably frigid silence.

"The military coxcomb outdoes the civil coxcomb!" thought Coffe to himself.

When at last he was comfortably settled for writing, he turned to M. de Séranville:

"If you care to communicate your list to us, we can now take it down."

"Certainly, certainly," said the diminutive Prefect.

"Superfluous repetition," thought the inexorable Coffe.

And the Prefect began to speak, but did not dictate.

"There are all the earmarks of the diplomat in that shade of difference," Lucien thought to himself. "He is less bourgeois than Riquebourg, but is he as apt to succeed? He spends so much thought on the figure he will cut in a drawing room, I wonder if he has any left for his job of Prefect and Director of Elections? In that narrow skull and low forehead are there brains enough for so much fatuity and work as well? I doubt it. *Videmus infra.*"

Lucien began to feel satisfied that he was adopting the correct manner with this captious little Prefect, and that he took sufficiently into account the rascality of the business in which

he had consented to take part. It was the first pleasure his mission had afforded him, the first compensation for his atrocious suffering over the mud-throwing of Blois.

Coffe wrote while the Prefect, sitting stiffly opposite Lucien, his knees pressed tightly together, recited:

Registered electors	1280
Probable number present	900
M. Gonin, constitutional candidate	400
M. Mairobert	500

He added nothing to the evidence of those lump figures: four hundred and five hundred, and Lucien did not deem it proper to ask him for further details.

M. de Séranville apologized for not lodging them at the Prefecture. As he had workmen in the house at the moment he was unable to offer them suitable rooms. He did invite them to dinner, but only for the following day.

The three gentlemen parted with a coolness that could not have been greater without being pointed.

Gaily, Lucien remarked to Coffe as soon as they were on the street:

“At least he’s less boring than Riquebourg.”

The consciousness of having played his part well relegated the incident of Blois to the background for the first time.

“And you behaved much more like a statesman,” Coffe rejoined. “That is to say, insignificant and given to elegant and empty commonplaces.”

“On the other hand, how much less we know about the elections of Caen after a whole hour than we did about M. de Riquebourg’s in fifteen minutes—that is, when you had finally got him away from his infernal generalities by your incisive questions. M. de Séranville never would admit of a comparison between himself and the worthy bourgeois Riquebourg who held forth to us on the subject of his cook’s accounts. M. de

Séranville is far more correct, is not at all ridiculous and, as my father would say, is *pickled* in suspicion and meanness. But I'll wager he isn't as good at his job as the Prefect of Cher."

"The animal certainly makes a better appearance than Riquebourg," Coffe admitted, "but it is very possible that he is worth much less."

"I noticed in his face, especially when he mentioned M. Mairobert, that same asperity which alone gives some life to the literary gems of the red pamphlet."

"Is he, by chance, a dismal fanatic who feels the need to be constantly active and plotting, making men feel the weight of his power? Has he turned this need of his for hurting people to the service of his ambition, as formerly he used it in his criticisms of the literary works of his rivals?"

"I think he has more of the sophist who likes to talk and cavil because he rather fancies himself as a profound reasoner. This man would exert a powerful influence in the Chamber of Deputies; he would be a Mirabeau for country notaries."

Leaving the Prefecture, they learned that the Paris courier did not leave until evening. Whereupon they merrily set out to take a look at the town. Some extraordinary event, it was evident, had roused these bourgeois provincials out of their habitual apathy.

"These people have not that listless air which is normal to them," Lucien remarked.

"You'll see, after thirty or forty years of elections, the provinces are going to be less stupid."

They went to inspect a collection of antiquities which had been discovered at Lillebonne, and wasted a great deal of time arguing with the custodian about the antiquity of an Etruscan chimera completely covered with verdigris. The custodian, on the authority of the librarian, had just fixed its age at twenty-seven hundred years, when our travelers were accosted by an extremely courteous individual.

"Will the gentlemen kindly pardon my addressing them without being known to them? I am General Fari's valet. The General has been waiting for an hour at the inn for the gentlemen, and begs that they will excuse his sending to inform them of the fact. General Fari has charged me to repeat his exact words: *There is no time to lose.*"

"We'll follow you," Lucien said to the General's man, and turning to Coffe, "that is a valet who fills me with envy."

"Let's see whether we can say: Like man, like master. As a matter of fact it was a bit childish of us to go looking at antiquities when we are charged with the mission of forging the present. Perhaps our conduct is just the natural result of our resentment at the administrative fatuity of Séranville. But, I must say, if you'll excuse the word, your military fatuity quite outdid his."

They found the entrance to the inn cluttered with gendarmes and in their sitting room, waiting for them, a ruddy-faced man of about fifty years. He looked rather like a peasant, but his eyes were gentle and vivacious, and his manners did not belie the promise of his eyes. This was General Fari, the Division Commander. In spite of his rather crude ways (he had been a simple Dragoon for five years), it would have been difficult to find anyone with greater courtesy or, as they were soon to discover, a better grasp of the situation. Coffe was astonished to notice that he was without the least sign of military fatuity. His arms and his legs moved exactly like those of any ordinary mortal. The zeal with which he was trying to get M. Gonin, the government's candidate elected, and to defeat M. Mairobert, had not the least taint of meanness, nor even of animosity. He spoke of M. Mairobert as he would have spoken of a Prussian General commanding a city he was besieging. Indeed, General Fari invariably spoke with great consideration of everyone, even of the Prefect; though it was evident that he was no exception to the rule that makes Generals the natural

and instinctive enemies of Prefects who are all-powerful in their Departments, whereas the Generals have only a dozen higher officers to bully.

The General told Lucien that he had started looking for him the minute he received the Minister's letter, which Lucien had sent him on arriving.

"But you were at the Prefecture. I admit, gentlemen, that I tremble for our election. M. Mairobert's five hundred and fifty electors are energetic and filled with conviction. They can make converts. Our four hundred electors are gloomy and silent. I shall speak plainly to you, gentlemen—we are on the eve of battle and any vain beating about the bush might compromise our affair—our electors are ashamed of their role. That devil of a Mairobert is the most honest of men, rich and obliging. He has been angry but once in his life, and that was when he was goaded into a positive frenzy by the black pamphlet. . . ."

"What pamphlet?" asked Lucien.

"Do you mean, sir, that M. de Séranville did not give you a pamphlet bound in funereal wrappers?"

"This is the first I have heard of it, and I should be much obliged if you would get me a copy."

"I have one right here."

"Why, this is impossible! It is the Prefect's own pamphlet. But, didn't he get the order by telegraph that he was not to let a single copy leave the printers?"

"M. de Séranville," replied the General, "took it upon himself to ignore that order. The pamphlet is really pretty violent and it has been in circulation since the day before yesterday. I will not try to conceal from you that it has had a most deplorable effect. At least, that is how it strikes me."

Lucien, who had only seen it in manuscript in the Minister's office, now glanced rapidly through it. But, as a manuscript is always difficult to read, the barbed and even slanderous satire

against M. Mairobert now seen in print seemed to him a hundred times worse.

"Great God," exclaimed Lucien as he read it, and his tone was rather that of an honest man who is painfully shocked, than a Commissioner of Elections worried over a false move. "And the election is day after tomorrow! And M. Mairobert is universally respected! This is just the thing to rouse honest but indolent people to action, and even the timorous."

"Yes," said the General, "I am very much afraid that this pamphlet will win M. Mairobert at least forty votes of that sort. For, it can't be denied, if he were not opposed by the King's government, M. Mairobert would have every vote except his own and those of a dozen or more rabid Jesuits."

"But at least he must be stubborn—niggardly?" Lucien insisted. "Here he is accused of winning lawsuits by giving dinners to the Judges of the Lower Court."

"He is the most generous man in the world. Naturally he has lawsuits. After all we are in Normandy!" said the General, smiling. "He wins them because he is a man of resolute character, but it is well known throughout the Department that, out of charity, he returned to a widow whose husband had begun an unjust suit against him, the entire sum she had been sentenced to pay him. M. Mairobert has an income of over sixty thousand pounds and every year he inherits twelve or fifteen thousand more. He has seven or eight uncles, all rich and unmarried. Unlike most openhanded men he is no fool. He doubles the revenues of perhaps forty farmers around here. If a farmer can prove to M. Mairobert that, after deducting the living expenses of his children, his wife and himself, he has made five hundred francs that year, M. Mairobert hands him an equal sum of five hundred francs, payable in ten years without interest. It is to accustom farmers, he says, to keep books like business men, otherwise there can be no agriculture. To perhaps a hundred small manufacturers, he gives a sum



equal to a third of their profits. In 1814, as Counselor of the provisory Prefecture, he directed the affairs of the Prefecture and took charge of everything during the occupation. He once defied an insolent Colonel, and even chased him out of the Prefecture at pistol point. In a word, he is a finished specimen of a man."

"M. de Séranville never breathed a word to me of all this," said Lucien. He read a few more sentences of the black pamphlet.

"My God! This pamphlet is our ruin!" he said hopelessly. "You are right, General, we are at the beginning of a battle that may well turn into a rout. Though M. Coffe and I have not the honor of being known to you, I am going to ask you to accord us your full confidence for the three days still remaining before the final ballot which will decide between M. Mairoubert and the government. I have a hundred thousand pounds at my disposal; I have seven or eight posts to distribute; by telegraph I can ask for at least as many removals. Here are my private instructions which I drew up for myself, and which I entrust to you alone."

General Fari read them slowly and with marked attention.

"M. Leuwen," he then said, "in what concerns these elections I shall have no secrets from you, as you have kept none from me, and I say: *It is too late!* If you had come two months ago, if M. de Séranville had consented to write less and talk more, perhaps we might have succeeded in winning over the timorous. All the wealthy people here, although they do not properly appreciate the King's government, have a terror of the Republic. Nero, Caligula, the devil himself might be King and they would support him out of fear of a Republic which, instead of governing us according to our natural bent, has the intention of remolding us; and they know very well that such a re-fashioning of the French character would require another Carrier or a Joseph Le Bon. So then, we are sure of three

hundred votes. We would have three hundred and fifty except for the fact that we must discount thirty Jesuits and fifteen or twenty landowners—the pious old men or the young men with weak lungs—who will vote as directed by Monseigneur the Bishop, acting in concert with the Henri V committee. We have in the Department thirty-three or -four out-and-out republicans. If it were a question of choosing between the Monarchy and the Republic we could count on eight hundred and sixty of the nine hundred votes, as against forty. But one could wish that the *Tribune* was not at its hundred and fortieth lawsuit; above all, that the King's government did not humiliate the nation in the eyes of foreigners. Hence the five hundred votes that the Mairobert party is counting on. Two months ago I didn't think M. Mairobert would have more than three hundred and fifty to eighty unquestionable votes. I felt sure that the Prefect would win at least a hundred on his electoral tour. But he hasn't the least personal appeal. He talks too well and lacks the gift of specious cordiality; he can't expect to win over a Norman in a conversation of half an hour. Even with his Police Commissioners he is terrible. But they grovel to him for all that. Realizing finally that he couldn't influence people personally, he has resorted to circulars and letters to the Mayors. It seems to me (of course I have never been an executive myself, all I have done is to command, and I bow to the judgment of those who are better qualified than I am), but, as I say, it seems to me that M. de Séranville, who writes very well, has overdone the administrative letter. I know more than forty Mayors (I can furnish the Minister with a list) who are up in arms over his continual threats. 'What can happen anyway,' they say. 'His election will miss fire. Well, and so much the better! He'll be removed and we'll be rid of him. They can't send us anybody worse.' M. Bordier, the timorous Mayor of the big Commune of N——, which has nine electors, was so terrified by the Prefect's letters and the nature of the in-

formation demanded of him, that he feigned an attack of gout. He let it be known that he was in bed and didn't leave his house for five days. But Sunday at six o'clock in the morning he went to Mass.

"In short, M. de Séranville by his electoral tour frightened away fifteen or twenty timorous electors and riled at least a hundred. These, added to the three hundred and sixty I regard as unshakable because they want a King Log who will stick to the Charter verbatim, make up a total of four hundred and sixty. That is M. Mairobert's count—an extremely small majority—only ten."

The General, Lucien, and Coffe discussed these figures at length, juggling them in every possible way. They invariably came out with at least four hundred and fifty votes for M. Mairobert, only one more making a majority in an Electoral College of "nine hundred."

"But Monseigneur the Bishop must surely have a favorite Grand Vicar," Lucien remarked. "What if this favorite Grand Vicar were to be offered ten thousand francs?"

"He is quite comfortably off and would like to become a Bishop," replied the General. "Besides, it is barely possible he's an honest man. It has been known to happen."

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WELL," said Lucien to Coffe as soon as General Fari had left them, "the sun is shining, it is only half-past-one, and I feel like sending a telegraphic dispatch to the Minister. It is better for him to know the truth."

"You do him a service and yourself a disservice. It's no way

to curry favor with him. This truth is unpalatable. And if M. Mairobert should not be elected after all, what will they think of you at Court?"

"Isn't it bad enough to be a rogue in reality, without acting like one?"

Lucien wrote out his dispatch. After making him strike out three words and substitute a single one in their place, Coffe gave his approval, and Lucien left for the Prefecture.

Going up to the telegraph office, he showed his credentials to M. Lamorte, the director, and asked him to transmit his dispatch without delay. The man seemed very much embarrassed and began temporizing. Fearing the mists of a winter day, Lucien kept glancing at his watch and finally spoke without mincing matters. The clerk intimated that it would be advisable for Lucien to consult the Prefect.

M. de Séranville was plainly annoyed. He read over Lucien's credentials several times and, on the whole, behaved exactly like his employee, M. Lamorte. Exasperated at having lost three-quarters of an hour already, Lucien said finally:

"At least, sir, deign to give me a clear, straightforward answer."

"I endeavor, sir, always to make myself clear."

"Then, sir, are you or are you not willing to have my dispatch sent?"

"It seems to me, sir, that I might see that dispatch. . . ."

"You avoid, sir, that clarity which you just led me to expect, after three-quarters of an hour already wasted."

"Your objection, sir, might, it seems to me, be couched in a tone rather more . . ."

Lucien interrupted the Prefect, who was by now pale with rage:

"I cannot admit further quibbling. It is getting late. To defer your answer is to give it in the negative without daring to admit as much."

"*Daring*, sir!"

"Will you or will you not allow my dispatch to go through?"

"Very well, sir! For the moment I am still the Prefect of Calvados and my answer is: *No*."

This *no* was spoken with all the fury of an outraged martinet.

"Sir," replied Lucien, "I shall have the honor of making my request in writing. I trust that you will dare to make your reply in writing as well, and I shall immediately send a courier to the Minister."

"A courier! A courier! You will have neither horses, nor courier, nor passport. Are you aware, sir, that at the — Bridge there is an order signed by me to let no one through without a passport, and a passport bearing a certain distinguishing mark?"

"Very well, Monsieur le Préfet!" and Lucien paused deliberately between each word, "from the moment you refuse to obey the instructions of the Minister of the Interior, there is no longer any government. I have orders for General Fari, and I shall ask him to arrest you."

"Arrest *me*, damn you!"

And the little Prefect hurled himself at Lucien who, picking up a chair, warded him off.

"With such behavior, sir, you will first be well thrashed and then arrested. Perhaps that will satisfy you."

"You are an insolent puppy, sir. I demand satisfaction."

"For the present I am obliged to confine myself to telling you that my contempt for you is unbounded; but I will do you the honor of crossing swords with you the day after the election of M. Mairobert. I shall now make it my business to write to you, sir, and, at the same time, to acquaint the General with my instructions."

At these last words the Prefect seemed beside himself with rage.

"If the General obeys the orders of the Minister of War," continued Lucien, "as I have no doubt he will, you will be arrested and I shall automatically assume control of the telegraph. In case the General is unwilling to use force, I shall give you, sir, the sole honor of getting M. Mairobert elected and shall leave for Paris. I shall pass the — Bridge, I assure you. Moreover, whether here or in Paris, I shall always be ready to reaffirm the contempt I entertain for your abilities and for your character. Good-day, sir."

Just as Lucien was about to leave the room there came a loud knock on the door which M. de Séranville had bolted as soon as their conversation became a little too heated. Now Lucien unlocked it.

"A telegraphic dispatch," announced M. Lamorte, the man who had made Lucien lose half an hour.

"Give it to me," said the Prefect with an arrogance that lacked the barest politeness.

The poor man stood petrified. He knew only too well the violence and vindictiveness of the Prefect.

"By God, sir, will you give me that dispatch?"

"It is for M. Leuwen," said the poor fellow in a scarcely audible voice.

"Well, M. Leuwen, you seem to be Prefect here!" cried M. de Séranville, baring his teeth in a bitter sneer. "I relinquish my place to you." And he went out, slamming the door so that the room shook.

"He looks like a wild beast," Lucien thought to himself.

"Will you kindly hand me that terrible dispatch, sir?"

"Here it is. But Monsieur le Préfet will report me! I hope you'll stand by me, sir."

Lucien read:

"M. Leuwen will take complete charge of the elections. Suppress the pamphlet without fail. M. Leuwen will reply immediately."

"And here is my reply!" cried Lucien as he wrote:

"Things could not be worse. M. Mairobert has a majority of at least 10 votes. Have quarreled with the Prefect."

Handing the waiting employee these three sentences, Lucien said:

"Send this off at once. I regret to say that the situation is grave. Without wishing to offend you, sir, in your own interest I must warn you that if this dispatch fails to reach Paris, or if a living soul here gets wind of it, I shall request your removal by the telegraph tomorrow."

"Ah, sir, my devotion and my discretion . . ."

"We'll judge of that tomorrow. Be off, sir. And lose no time."

M. Lamorte departed. Lucien looked around the room and, after a moment, burst out laughing. He found himself standing alone in front of the Prefect's table. There lay the Prefect's handkerchief, his open snuffbox, his scattered papers.

"I feel exactly like a thief," he said to himself. "Without false modesty I may say that I have more sang-froid than that little martinet."

He went to the door, called the usher, and had him stand in the doorway. Then sitting down at the Prefect's desk, at the side furthest from the fireplace so as not to appear to be reading the Prefect's scattered papers, he began to write. First, addressing M. de Séranville personally:

If you will take my advice, sir, until the day after the elections you will act as though what happened an hour ago were null and void. For my part, I shall not let anyone in the city know of the unpleasant incident.

I am, etc.

Leuwen.

He then took a large official sheet of paper:

Monsieur le Préfet,

In two hours, at seven o'clock this evening, I am sending a courier to His Excellency, the Minister of the Interior. I have the honor of asking you for a passport, and I beg that you will send it to me before half-past-six. It is desirable that you should affix the distinguishing marks you mentioned, so that my courier will not be delayed at the — Bridge. After leaving me with my letters, my courier will stop at the Prefecture to pick up yours, and will proceed at top speed to Paris.

Leuwen.

After sealing the two letters, Lucien called to the usher who, pale as death, was standing at the door.

"Take both these letters to Monsieur le Préfet."

"Is M. de Séranville still Prefect?" asked the usher.

"I said to give these letters to Monsieur le Préfet."

Then, coldly and with great dignity, Lucien left the Prefecture.

"You've behaved just like a child," Coffe said, when Lucien told him of his threat to arrest the Prefect.

"I don't think so. In the first place, I was not really angry, and was able to consider what I was going to do. If there is one thing in the world that can prevent M. Mairobert's election it is the departure of M. de Séranville and the temporary substitution of one of the Prefecture Councilors. The Minister told me that he would give 500,000 francs not to have M. Mairobert opposing him in the Chamber. Weigh that remark! Money is now the key to the whole question."

The General arrived.

"I have come to make my report."

"My dear General, won't you share my tavern dinner? I am about to send a courier to Paris and should be most grateful if you would look over and correct what I say about the general state of public opinion. It is better, it seems to me, that the Minister should know the truth."



The General looked at Lucien with an air of astonishment which seemed to say:

"You must be young indeed, or else you are gambling your future most recklessly."

But all he said was:

"You will find, sir, that in Paris they do not want to face the truth."

"Here," said Lucien, "is a dispatch I have just received by telegraph, to which I replied: 'M. Mairobert has a majority of ten votes. Things could not be worse.'"

Dinner was served. M. Coffe excused himself, saying that with the dispatches on his mind it was impossible for him to eat, and that he preferred to write his letters first and dine afterwards.

"We still have time enough before your courier leaves," said the General, "to hear the reports of two Police Commissioners and the Captain who is my second in everything concerning the elections. I don't want you to see things only through my eyes. I might be mistaken."

At that moment Presiding Judge Donis d'Angel was announced.

"What kind of a man is he?" asked Lucien.

"An insufferable chatterbox, explaining at length everything that is not of the slightest importance and carefully side-stepping any difficult question. Besides, he's always on the fence. He has extensive connections among the priests who, in this Department, are very hostile. He'll only make you waste a lot of precious time. It takes twenty-seven hours for your courier to get from here to Paris. It seems to me that you cannot get him started too soon, that is if you really wish to send him—a step I am very far from advising. But one thing I do emphatically advise: put off the Honorable Donis d'Angel until later this evening, or tomorrow morning."

And so it was done. Notwithstanding the sincerity and

probity of these two companions, their dinner was gloomy, dull and short. At dessert the two Police Commissioners arrived, and after them, a little Captain named Ménière. The latter was quite as sharp as the other two. He was looking forward to acquiring a Cross by this election.

"And that," said the General to Lucien, "is the sum of our brilliant achievements."

Finally, at half-past-seven, the courier galloped off, bearing with him Coffe's memorandum on the elections and thirty pages of explanations for M. de Vaize. In a separate letter Lucien gave the Minister a detailed account of his dispute with the Prefect. He reported the dialogue with absolute precision as though written by a stenographer.

At nine o'clock, the General returned to Lucien's inn, bringing fresh reports from the district of Risset. He also told Lucien that at six o'clock the Prefect had sent a courier to Paris. This gave him a half-hour start on their man. The General insinuated that the latter was not too anxious to overtake his comrade.

"Would it suit you, General, to go with me tomorrow morning on a round of visits to fifty of Caen's most respected citizens? This may attract some ridicule, but if it wins us ten votes it is worth it."

"For me it would be a pleasure to accompany you anywhere," the General replied, "but what of the Prefect? . . ."

After discussing at length the means to be employed to spare the morbid vanity of that eminent functionary, it was decided that the General and Lucien should each write to him. General Fari's zeal was both candid and prompt. They wrote their letters without delay, and the General's valet took them to the Prefecture. M. de Sérerville received the valet and questioned him at length. This association of Lucien and General Fari drove the poor man nearly out of his mind. To both letters he

replied in writing that he was indisposed and confined to his bed.

When the calls for the next day had been agreed upon, a list of the persons to be visited was drawn up, and little Captain Ménière, summoned once more, was sent into the next room to dictate to Coffe a few words of explanation about them. Pacing silently up and down, Lucien and the General racked their brains to try to find some way out of their dilemma.

"The Minister can no longer be of the least help; it is too late."

And the silence continued.

"General," Lucien said at length, "in the army, I am sure, you often risked a charge, even after the battle was three-quarters lost. According to last reports from the district of Risset, there is no further hope. More than twenty of our supporters will vote for M. Mairobert simply to get rid of de Séranville. Under these desperate circumstances what if we could find some way of approaching M. Le Canu, leader of the legitimist party?"

The General stopped short in the middle of the room. Lucien went on:

"I would say to him: 'Choose any one of your electors and I will have him nominated and turn the government's four hundred votes over to him. Can you, and will you send messengers with instructions to one hundred of your country gentry? With these votes added to ours we can defeat M. Mairobert.' After all, General, what can one more legitimist in the Chamber matter to us? In the first place, it's a hundred to one that he'll be some imbecile who will never open his mouth, or a bore whom nobody will listen to. Even if he has the eloquence of M. Berryer, the party is not dangerous. It represents only itself—that is, one hundred or, at the most, one hundred and fifty thousand wealthy Frenchmen. If I have understood the Minister correctly, better ten legitimists than one

Mairobert representing every small landowner in the four Departments of Normandy."

The General paced the floor for a long time before replying.

"It is an idea," he said at length, "but a very dangerous one for you. The Minister, who is some eighty leagues away from the field of battle, will blame you. When unsuccessful, a Minister is only too happy to find a scapegoat and have some actual performance to attack. I don't ask you what terms you are on with M. de Vaize . . . but, after all, sir, I am sixty-one and could be your father. . . . Let me tell you frankly what I think. . . . Even if you were the Minister's own son, this extreme measure you propose would be dangerous for you. As far as I am concerned, sir, this is not a military engagement and my role is to remain in the second or even third line.

"I am not the son of a Minister," the General added, smiling, "and I should be grateful if you would avoid mentioning that you have spoken to me about this project of joining forces with the legitimists. Should this election turn out badly, someone is going to be severely blamed, and I'd as soon remain in the background."

Suddenly, a thought occurred to Lucien: "Instead of drawing up his instructions for me himself, the Minister, who has been Prefect of two or three Departments, who has himself directed elections, who, in short, knows what is happening in the provinces as well as the will of the Château, said to me, 'Draw up your own instructions,'—to me who am the veriest novice in this business of politics. Was he afraid of compromising himself? Or did he want to compromise me?"

"I give you my word," continued Lucien aloud, "that no one shall know that I have ever spoken to you about this idea, and, to prove as much, I shall have the honor of giving you a letter before you leave. In regard to the interest you are good enough to show in my youth, my thanks are as sincere as your kindness, but I must confess that I am seeking nothing more than

the success of the election. All personal considerations are secondary. I should prefer not to make use of the unsavory expedient of removals; I do not want to use any infamous weapons; however I will sacrifice everything to our success. Unhappily I have been here in Caen for only ten hours, I don't know a soul here, and the Prefect treats me as a rival instead of an ally. If M. de Vaize is just, he will take all this into consideration. But, I should never forgive myself if I let fear of his censure serve as an excuse for doing nothing. I should look upon such a course as beneath contempt.

"This being understood, General, and you remaining entirely ignorant of the singular measure I propose under desperate circumstances (as shall be proved by a letter I shall have the honor of addressing to you) will you, knowing the country as you do, consent to give me the benefit of your advice, or will you force me to rely solely on those two Police Commissioners who'd be quite ready, for a consideration, to sell me to either party—legitimist or republican?"

To this General Fari replied:

"Your plan of campaign being drawn up without my participation, if you explain to me that you want to join forces with the legitimist party because your Minister prefers to have a fanatical or even a clever legitimist in the Chamber rather than M. Mairobert, I say neither yes nor no, inasmuch as no act of war or rebellion is involved. I do not point out the terrible effect of such a move on the adjoining Department of the Vendée, where the least of the petty nobles refuses to admit the highest government official into his drawing room. This being understood and agreed, you might say to me, 'General, I am a stranger here, will you guide me?' Is that what you will be good enough to put in your letter to me?"

"Exactly. That is how I look at it."

"Then, sir, my answer is: 'As far as its execution is concerned, I can have no opinion on the measure you wish to

adopt. The responsibility rests entirely with you. But, if you wish to ask me any questions, I am ready to reply.' ”

“I am going to write down the dialogue that has just taken place between us, General, and give it to you duly signed.”

“We'll make two copies, as for the provisions of a capitulation.”

“Agreed. Now then, how am I to put my plan into execution? How can I reach M. Le Canu without alarming him?”

General Fari thought for a few moments.

“You must send for that merciless chatterbox, Donis d'Angel, who would see his own father hanged if it would get him the Cross. But he'll be back, you won't have to send for him! I advise you to have him read your instructions. It will impress him to know that the Minister has such confidence in you that he let you draw them up yourself. Although suspicious by nature, once Donis d'Angel is convinced that you are in favor with the Minister, there is nothing he will refuse you. He showed that plainly enough in the lawsuit over press violations, when his bad faith was so flagrant that he was even hooted on the street by all the ragamuffins of the town. Besides, it's a small thing you are asking of him—merely to put you in touch with his uncle, Abbé Donis-Disjonval, a serene, discreet old gentleman and not too foolish for his age. If the Judge approaches his uncle in the right way, the latter will obtain an audience for you with M. Le Canu. But where and how, I cannot say. Beware of a trap. Will Le Canu wish to see you? That also I cannot tell you.”

“Hasn't the legitimist party a deputy leader?” Lucien asked.

“Certainly—the Marquis de Bron. But he takes care never to do anything of importance without the approval of M. Le Canu. You will see for yourself—Le Canu is a blond, beardless little man of about sixty-six or -seven who, rightly or wrongly, has the reputation of being the shrewdest man in all Normandy. In 1792 he was a rabid patriot. Consequently he is

a turncoat, and that makes the worst kind of rascal. Such men think they can never do enough to prove their zeal. He has the gentlest manners in the world—in other words, Machiavelli in person! One day he even asked me if he could be my confessor! He claimed that through the Queen he could have me made Officer of the Legion of Honor.”

“Well,” returned Lucien, “he shall be mine. I’ll confess to him. I’ll be entirely frank.”

After discussing MM. Donis-Disjonval and Le Canu at length, General Fari asked:

“And the Prefect? What are you going to do about him? How can you give the government’s votes to M. Le Canu?”

“I’ll get an order by telegraph and I’ll persuade the Prefect. If I obtain neither my order nor the Prefect’s assent, then I shall leave Caen, and when I get back to Paris I shall send my two intermediaries some money for Masses.”

“It is dangerous.”

“But at present our defeat is certain.”

Lucien had the General repeat in detail everything it was important for him to know. In ten hours’ time he had seen three hundred proper names pass under his eyes; he had insulted a man he had never seen before and assured him of his contempt; he was now making another man he had never seen before his intimate confidant, and the following morning he was probably going to negotiate with the shrewdest man in Normandy. Coffe kept saying to him: “You’re sure to get these people all mixed up.”

Presiding Judge Donis d’Angel was announced. A lean man with a square face, beautiful black eyes, rather scanty white hair, white side-whiskers, and enormous gold buckles on his shoes, he would have been personable enough if he hadn’t insisted on smiling all the time with a great show of frankness—certainly the most irritating form of hypocrisy! Lucien exercised all his self-restraint:

"I am in Normandy for a reason," he said to himself. "This man's father, I'd be willing to wager, was a simple peasant."

"Your Honor," Lucien began, "I should like first of all to make you fully acquainted with my instructions."

After that he spoke of his standing with the Minister, of his father's millions. Then, acting on the General's advice, he let the Judge talk without interruption for three interminable quarters of an hour.

"After all," he thought, "there is nothing more I can do this evening."

When the Honorable Donis d'Angel had quite exhausted himself, having insinuated in five or six different ways that the Cross was his rightful due, and that the government was really doing itself and not him an injustice by failing to confer on him an honor which it bestowed on young Surrogate Judges who had not worn the gown three years, Lucien spoke in his turn:

"The Minister knows all about you—your rights are recognized. What I require at this moment is that, at seven o'clock tomorrow morning, you introduce me to your uncle, Abbé Donis-Disjonval. I want M. Donis-Disjonval to arrange for me an interview with M. Le Canu."

At this strange intelligence, the Judge grew extremely pale.

"His cheeks are almost as white as his whiskers," thought Lucien.

"Moreover," Lucien continued, "I am instructed to recompense the friends of the government liberally for any trouble I may occasion them. But there is so little time. I'd give a hundred louis to see M. Le Canu an hour sooner."

"Being lavish with money like this," thought Lucien, "I shall give this man a high idea of the confidence the Minister deigns to repose in me."

We herewith skip twenty pages of the original narrative, and spare our reader all the sly waggishness of a provincial



Judge inspired by his desire for the Cross. We are afraid of causing the same sensations which M. Donis d'Angel's protestations of zeal and devotion produced in Lucien, whose moral disgust almost amounted to physical nausea.

"Unhappy France," he thought. "I never dreamed that Judges had come to this. The man hasn't even any qualms of conscience. What barefaced rascality! There is nothing he wouldn't stoop to."

An idea suddenly occurred to him:

"Lately, Your Honor, I believe that all the lawsuits in your court have been decided in favor of anarchists and republicans. . . ."

"Alas!" cried the magistrate, interrupting Lucien with tears in his eyes and in a woebegone tone. "I know it only too well. His Excellency, the Minister of Justice has written complaining to me on the subject."

Lucien could scarcely contain himself.

"Great God!" he thought, sighing like a man sunk in despair. "I'll hand in my resignation! I'll go to America! This final stage of my journey marks a milestone in my life! It is even more crucial than all the taunts and the mud of Blois."

Lucien suddenly became aware that, plunged as he had been in his own thoughts, for the last five minutes he had not heard a word of what Judge Donis was saying. His ears now became conscious of the sound of the worthy magistrate's words but at first failed to understand them.

With interminable details, none of which sounded entirely candid, His Honor was explaining all the efforts he had made to ensure the anarchists losing their suits. He complained bitterly of the courts. Juries, according to him, were detestable; the jury system was an English institution which it behooved us to get rid of as quickly as possible.

"Professional jealousy," thought Lucien.

"I have the faction of the cautious, sir," he complained, "the

faction of the cautious. They will be the ruin of the government and of France. Judge Ducros, when I reproached him for voting in favor of a cousin of M. Léfèvre, the liberal journalist of Honfleur and an out-and-out anarchist, had the effrontery to reply: 'Your Honor, I was named Surrogate Judge by the Directory, to which I swore allegiance, Judge of the Lower Court by Bonaparte, to whom I swore allegiance, Presiding Judge of the same court by Louis XVIII in 1814, confirmed by Napoleon during the Hundred Days, called to a more advantageous position by Louis XVIII on his return from Ghent, named Judge of the Court of Appeals by Charles X, and I intend to die a Judge. Well, if the Republic comes into power this time, we won't be immovable. And who would be the first to seek revenge but these gentlemen of the press? The wisest thing to do is to pardon. Just look at what happened to the Peers who condemned Marshal Ney. In other words, being now fifty years old, if you can give me the assurance that you will last another ten years, I will vote with you.' How shocking, sir, what selfishness! And this is the kind of infamous reasoning I see written in all eyes."

When Lucien recovered from his amazement, he said with the coldest air he could summon:

"Sir, the equivocal conduct of the Court of Caen (to put it in the mildest terms) will be counterbalanced by that of Presiding Judge Donis if he procures for me the interview I have solicited with M. Le Canu, and if this transaction *remains buried in the deepest secrecy.*"

"It is a quarter-past-eleven," said the Judge, looking at his watch. "It is quite possible that my uncle has not yet returned from his game of whist. My carriage is downstairs. Would you care, sir, to risk a fruitless ride? The venerable Abbé Disjonval will be impressed by the untowardness of the hour and all the more ready because of it to come to our assistance. Be-

sides, at this hour, the spies of the anarchist party will not see us; night marches are always the safest."

As Lucien followed the Honorable Donis d'Angel to his carriage, the latter kept on talking, harping on the danger of being too lavish with Crosses. According to him the government could accomplish wonders with Crosses.

"This man is at any rate obliging," thought Lucien, looking out at the city through the carriage window while the Judge talked on.

"The city seems to be extraordinarily lively for such an hour," he observed.

"It's these miserable elections! You have no idea, my dear sir, the harm they do. If the Chamber were elected only every ten years it would be far better—and more constitutional. . . ."

Suddenly he put his head out of the window and in a low voice ordered the coachman to stop.

"There is my uncle just coming home," he announced. At the same moment Lucien saw, walking slowly toward them, an old servant carrying a lighted candle in a round tin lantern protected by panes of glass a foot in diameter. With a remarkably firm step the venerable Abbé followed.

"He is just going into his house," the nephew explained. "He disapproves of my keeping a carriage so we'll wait here till he's in the house before getting out."

This they did. Then, after ringing for a long time at the entrance door, supplied with a wicket through which visitors were scrutinized, they were finally admitted to the presence of the Abbé.

"I come to you, my dear uncle, on the King's business, and in the King's service there is no untimely hour. Allow me to present, M. Leuwen, Master of Petitions."

The old gentleman looked stupefied, almost stupid. At the end of five or six minutes he invited them to be seated, and

it was only after at least a quarter of an hour that he apparently began to understand what it was all about.

"Invariably," Lucien thought to himself, "the Judge says simply *the King*. I'd be willing to wager a hundred to one that the worthy old gentleman thinks he is speaking of Charles X."

After making his nephew repeat all over again what he had been explaining for the last twenty minutes, Abbé Donis-Disjonval finally said:

"Tomorrow morning I am officiating at Sainte-Gudule. At half-past-eight, after benediction, I shall go to the Rue des Carmes and try to see the estimable Le Canu. With all his occupations, so numerous and so important, besides his religious duties, I cannot promise you that he will be able to receive me as he used to twenty years ago, before he had such a multitude of affairs on his shoulders. We were younger then, things could be done more quickly, these elections were unheard of. Tonight the city seems to be in a state of insurrection—just like 1786. . . ."

Lucien noticed that Donis d'Angel was not nearly so talkative in the presence of his uncle. He seemed to know how to handle the old gentleman, who was at least seventy years old. The Abbé's little head was entirely concealed by an enormous nightcap.

When they had left Abbé Disjonval, his nephew said to Lucien:

"As soon as I have seen my uncle tomorrow morning at about eight-thirty, I shall have the honor of calling upon you. Or, perhaps it might be better, since you have the advantage of being unknown to our agents of disorder on the streets, and will be taken for a young elector—almost all the young are liberals—if you would be so good as to meet me at my cousin Maillet's at 9 Rue des Clercs."

Next day at eight-forty-five, Lucien, leaving the General in

his carriage in the Cour Napoléon, hurried over to M. Maillet's. M. Donis d'Angel arrived almost at the same moment.

"Good news," he cried. "M. Le Canu grants your interview, either at this very instant or, if you prefer, at five o'clock this afternoon."

"I should rather go at once."

"M. Le Canu is taking his chocolate at Madame Blanchet's, 7 Rue des Carmes. Despite the fact that that is a rather deserted street, it is better, I assure you, that I should not accompany you. M. Le Canu is a great advocate of secrecy and does not care for what he calls useless publicity."

"I shall go to see him alone."

"7 Rue des Carmes, second floor rear. You must give two knocks on the door, followed by five. Two and five: Henri V is our *second* King, you see, Charles X being our first."

Lucien was completely dominated by his sense of duty. He felt like a General, a Commander-in-Chief who sees that he is going to lose the battle. Although thoroughly amused by all these details we have reported, he would not allow himself to be distracted by them.

"All this is too late," he said to himself as he looked for 7 Rue des Carmes. "We are going to lose the battle. Am I doing everything possible to be ready to take advantage of some lucky chance?"

There must have been someone listening at Madame Blanchet's door, for he had hardly knocked twice and then five times, when he heard whispering within.

After a short pause, the door was opened. Lucien was received in a dark room, as dismal as a prison warden's office, with its white-painted woodwork and smoky window panes, by a sickly looking man with a sallow face and drawn features. This was the Abbé Le Canu. The Abbé motioned with his hand to a high-backed chair. In place of a mirror over the mantelpiece hung a large black crucifix.

"What do you wish to see me about, sir?"

"Louis-Philippe, the King my master, has sent me here to Caen to prevent the election of M. Mairobert. M. Mairobert's election is, however, almost certain, inasmuch as he has four hundred and ten indubitable votes out of a probable total of nine hundred. The King, my master, commands three hundred and ten. If you care to have one of your friends elected, I am here to offer you our votes. Add to these the hundred and sixty of your country gentry, and you will have a man of your party in the Chamber. I make only one stipulation: he must be an elector, and a native of Caen."

"Ah! So you are afraid of M. Berryer!"

"I am afraid of nothing but the triumph of the opposition, which, by the way, would reduce the episcopal sees to the number fixed by the Concordat of 1802," replied Lucien, while thinking to himself:

"The man's tone is that of an old country Prosecutor." And he relaxed his cautious vigilance considerably. Thanks to the works of M. de Chateaubriand and the lofty idea generally entertained of the Jesuits, Lucien had conjured up in his still youthful imagination a wily dissembler, as artful as Cardinal Mazarin, combined with the aristocratic manners of M. de Narbonne, whom he had once glimpsed as a boy. The coarseness of M. Le Canu's manner as well as his tone of voice quickly gave Lucien his cue. "I am a young man who is bargaining for a piece of land worth a hundred thousand francs that a wily old pettifogger prefers not to sell me because he has been promised a hundred louis by a neighbor to reserve it for him."

"May I venture, sir, to ask for your credentials?"

"Here they are," replied Lucien, not hesitating to hand Le Canu the letter of the Minister of the Interior addressed to the Prefect. It is true he could have wished that certain sentences had not been there, but there was no time to lose.

"If only the Prefect had been willing to handle this transaction himself," thought Lucien, "we could have avoided letting Le Canu see the Minister's letter. But, even if his vanity hadn't been piqued, that captious little perfumed Prefect would never have agreed to any measure which he had not himself originated."

The look of vulgar anger, trying to mask itself as contemptuous disdain, with which the Abbé read the Minister's letter to the Prefect, succeeded in completely restoring Lucien's sense of reality and dispelling forever those lofty notions which M. de Chateaubriand's elegant periods had imposed on the world. The exaggerated wrath displayed by the leader of the church party at certain of the Minister's expressions, made Lucien smile.

"The man is trying to impress me by his indignation. I must not lose my temper and spoil everything. Let's see if, despite my youth, I can succeed in my role."

Lucien took a letter out of his pocket and began reading it attentively. From his expression one might have thought he was before a court martial. Abbé Le Canu stole a glance at him out of the corner of his eye. Seeing that he was not being observed, the Abbé's perusal of the ministerial letter became less affected. He re-read it carefully with the absorbed expression of a surly business man.

"Your powers are very extensive, sir. They are such as to give anyone a high idea of the missions with which, young as you are, you have been entrusted. May I venture to ask if you were already in government service under our legitimate Kings—before the fatal . . ."

"Permit me to interrupt you, sir. I should be loath to be obliged to use not very agreeable epithets in speaking of the adherents of your cause. As far as I am concerned, sir, it is my habit to respect any opinion professed by an honest man, and for that reason I am disposed to honor yours. Let me point

out, sir, that I shall make no attempt, directly or indirectly, to try to influence or alter in any way your point of view on any subject. Such an attempt would ill befit my age, as well as my personal respect for you. But it is my duty to request you to forget my age and all the respectful attention that, in any other circumstances, I should be prepared to give to your wise counsels. I come to you, sir, simply to propose a measure that seems to me advantageous both to my master and to yours. You have very few Deputies in the Chamber; one more spokesman is something scarcely to be scorned by your side. As for ours, we are afraid of the extreme measures M. Mairobert is likely to propose—among others, that of allowing the faithful to pay the doctor of their souls as they pay the doctor of their bodies. We are sure of defeating the measure at this session. However, if it won an imposing minority vote, we should perhaps find ourselves obliged to permit the reduction of the number of episcopal sees by tacit agreement, to prevent the Chamber from doing it by law.”

The ensuing arguments were endless, as Lucien had expected.

“My age is against me,” he thought. “I am like a cavalry General who in a lost battle, forgetting his own interests, tries the expedient of dismounting his men and having them fight on as infantry. If he fails, all the imbeciles will laugh at him, especially the cavalry Generals. But if he is a man of spirit, his consciousness of having, for the sake of victory, had the courage to do something regarded as impossible, will be sufficient consolation.”

Seven times in succession (Lucien counted them) Abbé Le Canu tried either to avoid answering Lucien or to outwit his young antagonist.

“Before giving me his answer, he evidently wants to put me to the test.”

Seven times Lucien succeeded in bringing Abbé Le Canu



back to the question in hand, but always in the most courteous terms, that implied his great respect for the Abbé's venerable age, which he seemed to hold entirely distinct from the Abbé's political views and the pretensions of his party. Once Lucien let his adversary gain a slight advantage. But he quickly repaired his slip without losing his equanimity.

"I must be just as much on my guard as in a duel with swords."

After a discussion of fifty minutes, Abbé Le Canu finally assumed an extremely haughty, insolent air.

"My man is about to reach a conclusion," Lucien decided. He was right.

"It is too late," said the Abbé.

But instead of breaking off the conference, he set about trying to convert Lucien.

"Now I am on the defensive," thought Lucien, feeling perfectly at ease. "This is the moment to introduce the idea of money and personal benefits."

Lucien did not defend his cause too obstinately. He spoke casually of his father's millions, and had the satisfaction of noticing that it was the one and only thing which made the least impression on the Abbé.

"You are young, my son—permit me the appellation which carries with it the expression of much esteem. Consider your future. You are, I should judge, not more than twenty-four."

"I am almost twenty-five."

"Well then, my son, without wishing to speak ill of the banner under which you are fighting, and limiting myself to what is absolutely essential for the expression of my thought (charged, moreover, with the greatest good will toward your interests in this world and the next), let me ask you this question: do you think that banner will still be floating, as it is today, fourteen years hence? You will then have reached the age of forty, that age of maturity which a wise man keeps

ever before his mind's eye as the crucial point in every man's career. For it is at that age, and rarely before, that a man begins to play an important part in the great affairs of the world.

"Until that age the ordinary run of men think only of making money. You are above such considerations. Observe that I do not speak of your soul's interests—so far above all mundane concerns. If you should deign to come to see an old man again, my door will always be open to you. I should lay everything aside to bring back to the fold a young man of your high repute in the world, and who, while still so young, has developed such mature gifts. For the less I share your illusions on the subject of a King raised to power by the revolution, the more I am in a position to appreciate the talent you have shown in trying to bring about a truly singular co-operation: David allied to the Amalekite! I beg you sometimes to stop and ask yourself the question: 'Who is going to be in power in France when I am forty?' Religion does not forbid a legitimate ambition."

The interview ended in a kind of sermon, but Lucien had been practically invited to come to see the Abbé again.

He was not discouraged.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

LUCIEN went to General Fari's to give him an account of his interview. Reports kept coming in from all sides and prevented the General from leaving his hotel. Lucien's idea of sending a telegraphic dispatch was thoroughly approved by General Fari, and afterwards by Coffe, who merely remarked:

"You are trying bloodletting on a man who is going to die

in two hours anyway. And all the fools can then say that you killed him."

Going to the telegraph office, Lucien sent the following message:

The nomination of M. Mairobert is considered certain. Would you care to spend a hundred thousand francs to have a legitimist elected rather than M. Mairobert? In that case, send the Receiver General a dispatch authorizing him to put a hundred thousand francs at the disposal of General Fari and myself. . . . The election starts in nineteen hours.

After leaving the telegraph office, Lucien decided to return to the Abbé Disjonval's. The difficulty was to find the house again. He succeeded in losing himself in Caen's maze of streets, but, finally, going into a church he found a sort of beadle to whom he gave five francs to conduct him to the Abbé's house. Leaving the church, the man led him through two or three different passageways separating several blocks of houses, and in four minutes Lucien found himself face to face with the Abbé Disjonval.

The Abbé had just finished an early luncheon, and a bottle of white wine still stood on the table. The man, whose face had been so completely devoid of expression yesterday, was now transformed.

After an introductory preamble of not more than ten minutes, Lucien was able, without appearing too indecent, to make the Abbé Disjonval understand that he was prepared to give a hundred thousand francs to keep M. Mairobert from being elected. The idea was not rejected too energetically. After a few moments, the Abbé laughingly asked Lucien:

"Have you those hundred thousand francs about you, by chance?"

"No," Lucien rejoined, "but a telegraphic dispatch which may arrive this evening, and which will certainly arrive be-

fore noon tomorrow, will give me credit to the amount of a hundred thousand francs on the Receiver General who will pay me the money in bank notes."

"Bank notes are looked upon with suspicion here."

This remark opened Lucien's eyes.

"Great God! Can I possibly succeed?" he asked himself.

"Would a bill of exchange, accepted by the first merchants of the city, be agreeable? Or, if you prefer, I can get gold or écus, as I choose."

Lucien intentionally prolonged this enumeration during which he saw his host's expression undergo an instant transformation. In spite of the prelate's recent meal, his face turned pale.

"Ah!" thought Lucien. "If only I had forty-eight hours ahead of me, the election would be mine."

Lucien made full use of his advantage and, to his unbounded satisfaction, the Abbé himself voiced, in a rather roundabout way to be sure, the thought Lucien had been mulling over for the last three-quarters of an hour: "Without the credit of a hundred thousand francs which the telegraph is to bring you, your negotiations can advance no further."

"It is to be hoped," said the Abbé Disjonval, "that the Abbé Le Canu and his friends have considered what an advantage it will be to have another spokesman in the Chamber, especially if the government has the weakness to allow the fatal discussion on a reduction of episcopal sees to be brought up once more. . . . Till tomorrow then at seven o'clock or, by two o'clock at the latest if nothing comes before. . . . The election of the President of the Electoral College begins at nine o'clock, the balloting will be closed at three."

"It is essential that your friends should not vote until after I have the honor of seeing you at two o'clock."

"That is no small thing you ask of me. We'll have to collect them in one room and lock them up."

Coffe was waiting for Lucien on the street. They hurried back to the inn to write a letter to the Minister.

"I fully realize the risks I run in mixing so actively in a hopeless affair. If the Minister wished to put all the blame on me, nothing would be simpler; but it is more than I can bear to see a battle being lost before my very eyes without bringing out my troops. The resources at my disposal are ridiculously inadequate, and rendered ineffectual by the stranglehold of time. At eight-forty-five I saw the cousin of Judge Donis; at nine o'clock I had an interview with the Abbé Le Canu, leader of the legitimist party, and was with him until eleven o'clock. At eleven-fifteen I went to see the Abbé Donis again, and at noon I was at General Fari's. At half-past-twelve I sent you my second telegraphic dispatch. Now, at one o'clock I am writing to you. At two o'clock, just to oil the wheels, I shall pay a call on Monseigneur, the Bishop. It is now too late for me to receive a reply to this letter. By the time Your Excellency reads it, all will be over. The chances are ten to one that M. Mairobert will be elected. But, up to the last moment, I shall offer my hundred thousand francs—provided you have decided that M. Mairobert's absence from the Chamber is worth that much. I shall regard it as a very happy chance if your telegraphic dispatch, in reply to my second dispatch, arrives before two o'clock tomorrow, the 17th. The election of the chairman of the Electoral College will begin at nine o'clock. The Abbé Disjonval seems disposed to delay the vote of his friends until two o'clock. The ballot will not, I hope, be closed until four."

Lucien hurried off to pay his diplomatic call on the Bishop. He was received with a haughtiness, contempt and arrogance that amused him. "We will lay that at the foot of the cross," he said, laughing, as he travestied to himself the prelate's favorite remark.

He carefully avoided all mention of business. "This is just a drop of oil in the machinery."

At half-past-one, he went to lunch at the General's, with whom he then continued the visits which had been decided upon the day before. At five o'clock he was completely exhausted. It had been the busiest day of his life. There still remained the most onerous duty of all, the Prefect's dinner. That disgruntled functionary was not likely to be very civil. Lucien had been informed by young Captain Ménière that the Prefect had set his two best spies to dog Lucien's footsteps.

Lucien felt a sense of profound satisfaction. He knew he had given all that was in him to this cause, whose justice, if the truth were told, seemed somewhat dubious. This little flaw in his contentment was offset by the consciousness of having had the courage recklessly to jeopardize the consideration he was beginning to enjoy at the Ministry of the Interior. More than once Coffe had said to him—or words to this effect:

"In the eyes of our old chief clerks and department heads, your conduct, even if crowned by the defeat of M. Mairobert, will be regarded merely as a rather splendid blunder. Have you forgotten what you once called them? As they sat in their mahogany armchairs during the discussion on the subject of foundlings, you said they were nothing but 'armchairs incarnate,' and they will certainly seize this opportunity to take their revenge."

"What should I have done then?"

"Nothing! Except to have composed three or four letters of six pages each. That is what, in ministerial departments, is called having administrative ability. They will always look upon you as mad, because of the way you risked your career. And then, to ask a hundred thousand francs for bribery at your age! They will spread the report that you put at least a third of it into your own pocket."

"That," replied Lucien, "was my first thought. A second has

just occurred to me: When you work in the interest of Ministers, it is not the adversary you have to fear but the men you are working for. That is how things were done at Constantinople in the Byzantine Empire. But even if I had done nothing, and written all those fine letters, I should still have the mud of Blois on my conscience. And you have been a witness of my weakness."

"A good reason for your hating me and having me removed from the Ministry," rejoined Coffe. "I have thought of that."

"On the contrary, it is a great comfort to me now to be able to tell you everything, and I beg you not to spare me."

"I shall take you at your word. That little carping Prefect must be bursting with rage against you. After all, you have been exercising his functions for the last two days while he writes hundreds of letters and, of course, does nothing. From all this we may safely conclude that he will be praised in Paris and you will be blamed. But tonight, no matter what he does, don't lose your temper. If we were living in the Middle Ages I should be afraid of poison for you. I can see that this little sophist suffers from the same sort of fury as an author whose play has been hissed."

The carriage stopped in front of the Prefecture. There were eight or ten gendarmes stationed outside on the first and second landings of the broad flight of stairs.

"In the Middle Ages these people would have been ready to assassinate you."

The gendarmes rose as Lucien passed.

"Ah, so your mission is known—the gendarmes are polite! Just think of de Séranville's fury."

That functionary was extremely pale and received the two gentlemen with constrained politeness which was certainly not made more cordial by the eager reception accorded Lucien by everyone else present.

The dinner was stiff and dismal. All these ministerial sup-

porters foresaw defeat on the following day. Each one was saying to himself: "The Prefect will be removed or sent elsewhere. I shall say that he deserves all the blame. This young whippersnapper is the son of the Minister's banker, and already a Master of Petitions. He may well be a successor in embryo."

Lucien ate ravenously; he was very gay.

"And I," said M. de Séranville to himself, "I send my plate away untouched, I can't swallow a mouthful."

As both Lucien and Coffe talked a great deal, little by little the conversation of the entire company, the District Collector of Direct Taxes, the Controller of Public Lands, and other high officials, was entirely addressed to the newcomers.

"And I am ignored," thought the Prefect. "Already I am a stranger in my own house, my removal is certain, and, in addition, I am forced to do the honors of the Prefecture for my successor—a thing that has certainly never happened before."

Toward the middle of the second course, Coffe, whom nothing escaped, noticed that the Prefect kept wiping his forehead.

Suddenly a great commotion was heard outside. The courier had just arrived from Paris. The man burst noisily into the room, and the District Collector of Indirect Taxes, who was sitting near the door, said to him:

"That is Monsieur le Préfet over there."

"I don't want Prefect de Séranville," the courier said with a coarsely insulting emphasis. "I want M. Leuwen, Master of Petitions."

"What humiliation!" thought M. de Séranville. "I am no longer Prefect." And he fell back on his chair. Then leaning forward over the table he buried his head in his arms.

"M. de Séranville has fainted," cried the Secretary General glancing apologetically at Lucien, as though to ask his pardon for this gesture of humanity which called attention to the



Prefect. That functionary had, in truth, fainted. They carried him over to a window which had been thrown open.

During this time, Lucien was surprised to notice the total lack of interest in the dispatch the courier had brought. It was a long letter from the Minister all about Lucien's conduct at Blois. M. de Vaize had added, in his own hand, that the authors of the riot would be found and punished, that he had read Lucien's letter aloud to the King and the Council, and that it had been highly approved.

"But not a word of the present election," thought Lucien. "It was hardly worthwhile to send a courier just for that."

He went over to the window where they were engaged in rubbing the Prefect's forehead with eau de Cologne, and endlessly repeating: "It's the fatigue of the elections." Lucien made some suitable remark and then asked permission to retire with M. Coffe for a moment.

"Think of sending a courier for a letter like that," Lucien said, handing the Minister's letter to Coffe.

He now opened a letter from his mother brought by the same courier. As he read it his expression changed. He became serious: Madame Leuwen expressed alarm for her son's life. "And for *such a filthy cause*," she added. "Drop everything and come home. . . . I am alone. Your father has taken a notion to be ambitious, and has gone to the Department of Aveyron, two hundred leagues from Paris, to get himself elected Deputy."

Lucien acquainted Coffe with the news.

"It was your mother's letter that made them send a courier. Madame Leuwen must have insisted on her letter reaching you quickly. On the whole, there is nothing in it to change your plans. At this moment, it seems to me, your place is in there with that little Jesuit who is dying of suppressed hate. And I am now about to finish him off with my air of importance!"

Coffe was indeed perfection as he re-entered the dining

room. He had taken eight or ten election reports out of his pocket and stuck them in the dispatch which he carried as though it were the *holy sacrament*. M. de Séranville had regained consciousness, he had vomited, and now looked up at Lucien and Coffe in his anguish with a moribund air. The state of this spiteful little man touched Lucien; he saw in him simply a suffering human being.

"We must relieve him of our presence," Lucien thought. And after a few courteous words he and Coffe retired.

The courier ran down the stairs after them to ask for instructions.

Coffe answered him with admirable gravity:

"The Honorable Master of Petitions will send you back to-morrow with dispatches."

The next day, the 17th, was the day of the election.

At seven o'clock in the morning of this great day, Lucien was already at the Abbé Disjonval's. He was struck by the change in the venerable old gentleman's manner. The Abbé was now all eagerness; Lucien's most insignificant remark was not allowed to pass unanswered.

"Those hundred thousand francs are having their effect," Lucien said to himself.

Several times, however, the Abbé made it quite clear, but with a delicacy and courtesy which astonished Lucien, that anything he might say, in the absence of the principal condition, was contingent on the future.

"Precisely," said Lucien. "That is how I understand it. But, even if today, and in good time, the telegraph does not bring me a credit of a hundred thousand francs, I shall in any case have had the privilege of your acquaintance; I shall have had an interview with the Abbé Le Canu which has left a deep impression on my mind; and my esteem will have been redoubled for the men who believe that the welfare of our dear country

lies along a different road from the one which to me seems the safest to follow, and . . ."

But we shall spare our reader all the fine phrases inspired by the necessity of persuading the Abbé and his friends to be patient until the arrival of the diplomatic dispatch. The unaccustomed turmoil in the street which was occasioned by the great event of the day, and which reached Lucien even at the rear of the house where the Abbé's apartment was situated, seemed to strike an answering chord in his own breast. What would he not have given for the election to be put off for another day!

At nine o'clock he returned to his inn, where Coffe had prepared two enormous narrative and explanatory letters.

"What a strange style!" remarked Lucien as he signed them.

"Pompous and vapid, and never, above all, simple and straightforward—that is what the ministerial departments like."

The courier was now sent for.

"Sir," said the courier, "would you be so good as to permit me to take charge of the Prefect's—that is to say, M. de Séranville's—dispatches. I won't try to hide from you, sir, that he has promised me quite a nice little gift if I would take his letters. But after all, you're the one that's sending me. . . . I know what's proper."

"You may go to the Prefect on my behalf, and ask him for his letters and packets—wait half an hour if necessary. The Prefect is the first representative of the government in the Department. . . ."

"Catch me telling the Prefect he sent me," the courier said to himself. "What about my tip if I did? They say he's an old skinflint."

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

GENERAL FARI, through his young aide-de-camp, had rented a second floor apartment opposite the Hall of the Ursulines where the election was to take place. There, with Lucien, he took up his headquarters at ten o'clock in the morning. News was brought to them at fifteen minute intervals by the General's agents. Even some of the Prefect's agents, having learned of the dispatches of the day before, and seeing in Lucien their future Prefect, sent him cards marked with red pencil every quarter of an hour. The information on these cards turned out to be exact.

The electoral proceedings followed the usual course. The chairman by seniority was a man devoted to the Prefect. The latter had seen to it that the heavy berlin of M. Marconnes, who was older, was held up at the city gates so that it did not arrive until eleven o'clock. Thirty ministerial supporters who had breakfasted at the Prefecture were hooted as they entered the election hall.

A little printed broadside had been plentifully distributed among the electors. It read:

Honest people of all parties who desire the welfare of the country in which you were born, rid yourselves of the Prefect, M. de Séranville. If M. Mairobert is elected Deputy, M. de Séranville will be removed or sent elsewhere. What difference does it make who is elected Deputy so long as we get rid of a mean, mischief-making, lying Prefect? Is there one of you to whom he has not broken his word?

Toward noon, the election of the permanent chairman was going badly. All the electors from the district of — arrived early and voted for M. Mairobert.

"It is to be feared," observed the General, "that if Mairobert is made chairman, fifteen or twenty of our ministerial supporters, the timorous ones, and ten or fifteen imbecile country electors, seeing him in the most conspicuous position, will hardly dare put any other name on their ballots."

Every fifteen minutes Lucien sent Coffe to observe the telegraph. He was on tenterhooks waiting for the reply to his second dispatch.

"The Prefect is perfectly capable of delaying the reply," said the General. "It would be just like him to have sent one of his clerks to the telegraph station four leagues from here on the other side of the hill, to stop everything. It is by such feats he imagines he will become another Cardinal Mazarin—for he is well up on the history of France, our little Prefect."

And the worthy General hoped by this remark to show that he too was up on history! Young Captain Ménière offered to get on his horse and ride posthaste to the top of the hill from which the second telegraph station could be observed. But Coffe, borrowing the Captain's horse, galloped off in his stead.

There were at least a thousand people gathered in front of the Hall of the Ursulines. Wishing to get an idea of the tenor of popular opinion, Lucien went down to the square to listen to what people were saying. He was recognized. With true mob courage the crowd became insolent:

"Look! Look! That's the little fop of a Police Commissioner they've sent down from Paris to spy on the Prefect!"

Lucien was now almost impervious to such remarks.

Two o'clock struck . . . half-past-two. The telegraph did not budge.

Lucien was dying with impatience. He went to see the Abbé Disjonval who, Lucien thought, showed marked signs of resentment.

"I could not put off my friends' voting any longer," said the Abbé. Yet Lucien felt sure that he had, in reality, put them off.

"This man thinks I have been playing with him, while he has dealt squarely with me. I'd be willing to swear he has kept his not very numerous following from voting."

As Lucien was trying to prove in the warmest terms that he had had no intention of deceiving the Abbé, Coffe arrived quite out of breath.

"The telegraph is moving!"

"Be so kind as to wait for me here a few moments longer, sir," said Lucien, addressing the Abbé Disjonval. "I'll run over to the telegraph office and be with you again in a quarter of an hour."

Twenty minutes later Lucien came rushing back.

"Here is the dispatch," he said, handing it to the Abbé:

The Minister of Finance to the Receiver General:

Remit one hundred thousand francs to General Fari and M. Leuwen.

"The telegraph is still moving," Lucien added.

The Abbé Disjonval appeared satisfied.

"I shall go at once and see what I can do about the election of the chairman. We shall put up M. de Cremieux. After that I shall make all haste to see M. Le Canu, and I advise you to go to him without delay."

The door of the Abbé Le Canu's apartment was open. There was a crowd of people waiting in the anteroom as Lucien and Coffe hurried through.

"This, sir," said Lucien, "is the dispatch."

After reading it, the Abbé glanced at the clock.

"It is ten minutes past three. . . . I trust that you have no objection to M. de Cremieux: fifty-five years of age, an income of twenty thousand francs, subscribes to the *Débats*, did not emigrate."

"General Fari and I approve M. de Cremieux. If he is elected instead of M. Mairobert, the General and I will remit to you

one hundred thousand francs. But while awaiting the outcome, to whom do you wish the hundred thousand francs to be entrusted?"

"Calumny, sir, is ever on the alert. It is already a great deal that four persons, no matter how honorable, know a secret which slander might so readily pervert to its own advantage. There is this gentleman," and the Abbé indicated Coffe, "yourself, the Abbé Disjonval, and myself. Why must this detail be divulged to General Fari, worthy though he be of every regard?"

Lucien was charmed by these words which were *ad rem*.

"Sir," he replied, "I am too young to take upon myself the sole responsibility of such a considerable secret expense. . . ."

Lucien finally persuaded M. Le Canu to consent to the General's intervention.

"But," said the Abbé, "I formally insist, I even make it a condition *sine qua non*, that the Prefect be entirely left out of the affair."

"A nice recompense," thought Lucien, "for all the poor man's assiduous attendance at Mass."

It was agreed at last that the sum of a hundred thousand francs should be deposited in a little coffer to which General Fari and a friend of M. Le Canu, M. Ledoyen, should each have a key.

On his return to their headquarters opposite the election hall, Lucien found General Fari looking unusually flushed. The moment was approaching when the General had decided to cast his vote and, as he confessed, he dreaded the thought of being hissed. In spite of this private apprehension, he was much pleased to learn of the *ad rem* character the Abbé Le Canu's replies had acquired.

Lucien received a note from the Abbé Disjonval asking him to send Coffe to him. When Coffe returned half an hour

later, Lucien sent for the General, and Coffe gave them his report.

"I saw, actually saw with my own eyes, fifteen men mounted on horseback ready to scour the country to make sure that a hundred and fifty legitimist electors should arrive this evening or tomorrow morning. The Abbé Disjonval is like a young man—nobody would think he was more than forty. Three times, at least, he said to me: 'If only we had time to have four articles in the *Gazette de France*!' I really believe they are going about it in good earnest."

The director of the telegraph office sent a second telegraphic dispatch to headquarters, addressed to Lucien personally:

"I approve your projects. Distribute a hundred thousand francs. Any legitimist, no matter whom, even Berryer or Fitz-James, rather than Hampden."

"I don't understand," said the General. "Who is Hampden?"

"Hampden stands for Mairobert. It is the name agreed on with the Minister."

"But I must be off now," cried the General in a state of great agitation. "It is time," and taking up the tunic of his uniform he left their post of observation to cast his vote across the street. The crowd made way for him as he walked the dozen or more steps to the election hall. He entered, and as he crossed the hall to the table, all the Mairobert electors broke into applause.

"He's not a contemptible rogue like the Prefect," could be heard on all sides. "He has nothing but his pay to live on, and he has a family to support."

Lucien now sent the following dispatch—his third:

Caen, four o'clock.

Legitimist leaders seem to be acting in good faith. Military observers stationed at the gates have seen nineteen or twenty agents leaving to round up a hundred and sixty legitimist electors. If eighty or a hundred arrive before three o'clock the 18th, Hampden will



not be elected. At this moment, Hampden has a majority for the chairmanship. Ballots will be counted at five o'clock.

The results of the count were as follows:

Electors present	873
Majority	437
M. Mairobert	451
M. Gonin, the Prefect's candidate	389
M. de Cremieux (candidate of M. Le Canu after accepting the hundred thousand francs)	19
Scattered votes	14

Those nineteen votes for M. de Cremieux pleased Lucien and the General immensely. It was part proof that M. Le Canu was not deceiving them.

At six o'clock securities above reproach to the amount of a hundred thousand francs were remitted by the Receiver General himself into the hands of General Fari and Lucien, who gave him a receipt.

M. Ledoyen arrived. A very wealthy landowner, he was universally respected. The ceremony of the coffer was accomplished, word of honor exchanged that the coffer and its contents would be handed over to M. Ledoyen should any candidate other than M. Mairobert be elected, and to General Fari if M. Mairobert were victorious.

When M. Ledoyen left them, dinner was served.

"The important thing now is the Prefect," said the General in an unusually gay mood. "Let's muster our courage and open the attack! There will undoubtedly be 900 voters tomorrow. Today M. Gonin had 389, M. de Cremieux 19, which makes a total of 408. So we have 408 votes out of 873. Supposing that 27 votes come in tomorrow morning, giving 17 to Mairobert and 10 to us: Cremieux, 418; Mairobert, 468. Then M. Le Canu's 51 votes will give M. de Cremieux the advantage."

These figures were twisted and turned in a hundred differ-

ent ways by the General, Lucien, Coffe and the General's aide-de-camp, assembled around the table.

"Let's call in our two best agents," the General suggested.

Those gentlemen presented themselves and, after a fairly long discussion, arrived independently at the conclusion that sixty legitimist votes would settle the matter.

"And now," cried the General, "on to the Prefecture!"

"If you don't find my request indiscreet, General, may I ask you to do the talking? The poor man can't endure me."

"Isn't that contrary to our agreement? My role was to be an entirely secondary one. However, if you like, I will, as they say in England, *open the debate*."

General Fari was always trying to show that he was a highly lettered man. But, as a matter of fact, he was much better than that: he was blessed with rare common sense and natural goodness.

Hardly had the General explained to the Prefect that they had come to ask him to turn over the votes he had had at his disposal yesterday for the election of the chairman to M. de Cremieux who, in turn, would do everything in his power to assemble sixty legitimist votes—perhaps even eighty—than the Prefect interrupted him:

"I might have expected this! After all those telegraphic dispatches. However, gentlemen, there is one vote you won't get. I have not yet been removed, and M. Leuwen is not yet the Prefect of Caen."

All that rage could put into the mouth of a conniving little sophist was now discharged upon the General and Lucien. The scene lasted five hours. Only toward the very end did the General begin to lose patience. Never wavering in his refusal, M. de Séranville kept changing his reasons for refusing.

"But looking at it, sir," said the General, "from a purely selfish point of view! Your election is patently lost. It is to your advantage to let it die in M. Leuwen's hands. He then, like the

doctors who are called in too late, will get all the blame for the death of the patient."

"He will get what he likes or what he can, but, until my removal, he will not get the Prefecture of Caen."

At this reply of M. de Séranville's, Lucien had to restrain the General.

"A man who desired to betray his government," cried the General, "could do no more than you are doing! And that, sir, is what I shall write to the Ministers. Good-night, sir."

Leaving the Prefecture at half an hour after midnight, Lucien said to the General:

"I shall write M. Le Canu of this charming result."

"If you take my advice you will wait and see what these doubtful allies are going to do. Let's do nothing until tomorrow morning after your telegraphic dispatch. Besides, that confounded little Prefect might change his mind."

Five o'clock the next morning found Lucien waiting for daylight in the telegraph office. The moment it was light enough to see clearly, the following dispatch, the fourth, was sent:

Last night the Prefect refused to give his 389 votes to M. de Cremieux. The 70 or 80 votes, obtained by General Fari and M. Leuwen from the legitimists, are now useless, and M. Hampden will be elected.

After thinking it over, Lucien, instead of writing, went himself to see MM. Disjonval and Le Canu. He explained the new disaster with such simplicity and evident sincerity that these gentlemen, who knew the Prefect's character, were in the end convinced that Lucien had not been setting a trap for them.

"The mind of this little Prefect of the *Glorious Days*," said M. Le Canu, "is like the horns of the billy goats where I come from: black, hard and twisted."

Poor Lucien was so obsessed by his determination not to pass

for a rogue that he begged M. Disjonval to accept his purse as reimbursement for the expense of messengers and other things, which the extraordinary convocation of legitimist electors must have entailed. M. Disjonval refused, but before leaving the city, through the intermediary of the Abbé's nephew, Judge Donis d'Angel, Lucien sent him five hundred francs.

At ten o'clock on the morning of the election five letters arrived from Paris containing the startling information that an indictment had been signed against M. Mairobert as instigator of the great republican insurrectional movement that was being talked about everywhere at that time. Instantly twelve of the wealthiest merchants of Caen declared that they would not vote for Mairobert.

"This is something really worthy of the Prefect," General Fari remarked to Lucien. They were once more in their observation post opposite the Hall of the Ursulines. "Funny if that little sophist succeeded after all. In that case," the General added with all the gay and generous kindliness of a man of feeling, "if the Minister has the least resentment toward you, and needs a scapegoat, you will certainly be given that charming role."

"I would do the same thing all over again a thousand times. Although the battle seemed lost, I engaged my regiment!"

"What a good fellow you are!" cried the General, but quickly added, "If you will permit me so familiar an expression." He was afraid of having failed in the amenities which for him were like a foreign language learned late in life. Lucien pressed his hand and let his heart speak for him.

At eleven o'clock it was estimated that there were 948 electors present.

Judge Donis, arriving at the same moment as the General's messenger with the above information, attempted to force his way into their office against orders, but without success.

"We might receive him for a moment," Lucien proposed.

"Ah, no! It could be used as a basis for calumny on the part of the Prefect, of M. Le Canu, or of those poor republicans who are even madder than they are malicious. Go out and see the worthy Judge, but don't let yourself be betrayed by your natural honesty."

Returning, Lucien explained:

"He just came to let us know that, in spite of the counter-orders of this morning, there are forty-nine legitimists in the Hall of the Ursulines, as well as eleven of the Prefect's supporters who have been won over to M. de Cremieux."

The election pursued a peaceful course. The figures were less promising than the day before. The Prefect's false news of the indictment against M. Mairobert had put that gentleman, who had never been known to lose his temper, into a towering rage, as well as all his followers. Two or three times there was danger of an outburst. They wanted to send three agents to Paris at once to question the five persons who had sent down the false news of the indictment. But finally a brother-in-law of M. Mairobert, jumping upon a wagon stationed a hundred feet from the hall, addressed the excited crowd:

"Let us put off our vengeance for forty-eight hours after the election, otherwise it will simply be foiled by the majority which is sold to the Chamber of Deputies."

Soon twenty thousand copies of this brief address were printed. Someone had even had the idea of setting up the press right on the square next to the election hall. The Prefect's police were afraid to go near the press, or to do anything to prevent the distribution of the circular. All this made a great impression on the indignant throngs, and did much to quiet them.

Lucien wandered boldly about among the crowds and was not insulted that day. He noticed that this mob was fully conscious of its power. Unless fired on from a distance, no display of force was likely to daunt it.

"This is truly the rule of the People," he thought to himself.

From time to time he would return to headquarters. In the opinion of Captain Ménière no one would win a majority that day.

At four o'clock the Prefect received a dispatch from Paris ordering him to turn over his votes to the legitimist candidate designated by General Fari and Lucien. The Prefect failed to have Lucien or the General informed of this order. At four-fifteen Lucien received a similar dispatch. Whereupon Coffe recited the line from *Polyeucte*:

A shade less good fortune but sooner encountered . . .

The General was delighted with this quotation and asked Coffe to repeat it.

At that moment they were deafened by a general earsplitting cheer.

"Is it joy or revolt?" cried the General, hurrying over to the window.

"It is joy," he announced with a sigh. "We are f . . . ed."

It was true. At that moment a messenger, his coat torn from his struggles to break through the crowds, arrived with the election returns.

Electors present	948
Majority	475
M. Mairobert . . . . .	475
M. Gonin, the Prefect's candidate	401
M. de Cremieux . . . . .	61
M. Sauvage, republican (whose ambition was to change French character by means of Draconian laws) .	9
Scattered votes .	2

That evening the whole city was illuminated.

"But which are the windows of the Prefect's 401 supporters?" Lucien asked Coffe.

The answer was a terrific noise of broken glass. They were smashing the windows of Judge Donis d'Angel.

The next day Lucien woke at eleven o'clock and went for a solitary walk through the city. A singular question had taken possession of his thoughts:

"What would Madame de Chasteller say if I were to tell her of my conduct?"

He spent at least an hour trying to find the answer to this question, and a very sweet hour it was indeed.

"Why shouldn't I write to her?" he finally asked himself. And this second question preoccupied him for a week.

As he was nearing Paris, he happened to think of the street on which Madame Grandet lived, and then of her. He burst out laughing.

"What's the matter?" asked Coffe.

"Nothing. Only I had quite forgotten the name of a lovely lady I am supposed to be madly in love with."

"I assumed you were thinking of the welcome you are about to receive from the Minister."

"The devil with him. . . . He will receive me coldly, will ask for a statement of my disbursements, and will find that it all came very high."

"It depends on the report the Minister's spies have given him of your mission. Your conduct has been wildly imprudent. You have indulged without restraint in that folly of early youth which is called zeal."

## CHAPTER TWENTY

LUCIEN'S CONJECTURES proved to be fairly accurate. M. de Vaize received him with his customary politeness, but failed to ask him a single question about the elections, or to congratulate him on his trip; he treated him exactly as though he had seen him the day before.

"He has better manners than are natural to him. Since he became Minister he mixes in good company at the Château."

But after this flash of intelligence, Lucien became once more afflicted by that folly known as love of the truth—at least in the matter of details. He had summed up in a few sentences the useful observations made during his mission. It required great self-control not to tell the Minister frankly everything he had found patently evil, and which could so easily be ameliorated. He was certainly not governed by vanity. He knew exactly how the Minister would judge everything that, directly or indirectly, had the remotest relation to logic or straightforward narration. But because of his foolish love of truth, which is quite unpardonable in a man whose father keeps a carriage, Lucien was eager to correct three or four abuses—at least those which did not bring the Minister a penny. He was, however, sufficiently *civilized* to feel a mortal fear lest his love of truth should make him overstep the bounds which the Minister's tone seemed to set to their relations.

"How humiliated I should feel if, with a public official in a position so far above mine, while I talk about useful things, he should speak to me only of trifling details."

Lucien let the subject drop, and fled. He found his office occupied by young Desbacs who had taken his place while he



was away. . . . This little person, who, before Lucien's trip, had danced obsequious attendance, was now extremely cool as he acquainted Lucien with the current state of affairs.

During that day Lucien had no occasion to speak to Coffe who was working in an adjoining room and who, for his part, had met with an even more significant welcome. At half-past-five Lucien called him and they went out to dinner. As soon as they were alone in a private room of the restaurant:

"Well?" said Lucien, laughing.

"Well," replied Coffe, "all the good and admirable things you did to try to save a lost cause constitute nothing but a glaring sin. You will indeed be fortunate if you escape the charge of Jacobinism or Carlism. In the office they are still looking for a name for your crime; they are in agreement only as to its enormity. Everybody is watching to see how the Minister is going to treat you. You have certainly cooked your goose."

"How lucky for France," rejoined Lucien gaily, "that these rascally Ministers don't know how to take advantage of that folly of youth called zeal. I should be curious to know whether a General-in-Chief would behave in the same way toward an officer if, in a retreat, his subaltern should make a regiment of Dragoons dismount in order to attack a battery barring the road and engaged in a horrible massacre?"

After endless repetition, Lucien finally convinced Coffe that neither had he any desire to marry a member of the Minister's family, nor any favor to ask.

"But then," asked Coffe in amazement, "why the marked partiality shown you by the Minister before your mission? And at present why, after M. de Séranville's letter, doesn't he wreck your career?"

"He is afraid of my father's drawing room. If I didn't have the most dreaded wit in Paris for a father, I should be in your boots. I should never have been able to live down that terrible disgrace of École Polytechnique republicanism. . . . But tell

me, do you think that a republican government could be quite as absurd as this one?"

"It would be less absurd but more violent; it would frequently be a ravening wolf. Do you want me to give you a proof? It isn't hard to find. If tomorrow you were an omnipotent Minister of the Interior, what changes would you make in the Departments of M. de Riquebourg and M. de Sérenville?"

"I would name M. Mairobert Prefect, and give General Fari command of the two Departments."

"Good. Now consider the consequences of such measures, think of the wild enthusiasm that would take possession of all the partisans of good sense and justice in both the Departments. M. Mairobert would be king of his Department. Then think of what would happen if that Department decided to have an opinion on what goes on in Paris. And, speaking of what we both know something about, what if it decided to turn a rational eye on the four hundred and thirty pompous noodles, you and me included, engaged in scribbling in the Rue de Grenelle? If those Departments decided that the Ministry of the Interior could be run by six competent men, at salaries of thirty thousand francs apiece, with ten thousand francs for office expenses, who would sign everything of secondary importance themselves, what would become of the three hundred and fifty (at least) clerks who are employed to wage such ruthless war on common sense? And, little by little, what would become of the King? All government is an evil, but an evil which preserves us from a greater. . . ."

"You talk just like Gauthier, the wisest man I have ever known, a republican of Nancy. If only he were here to argue with you! Besides, he is a man who understands Lagrange's *Theory of Functions* as well as you do, and a hundred times better than I. . . ."

The discussion between the two friends was endless. Not

being afraid to differ with Lucien, Coffe had won the latter's affection and felt obliged to respond to his remarks out of gratitude. Coffe could not get over his amazement at the fact that, although rich, Lucien was not more absurd. With this thought in mind, he asked:

"Were you born in Paris?"

"Yes, of course."

"And your father has always had a magnificent house, and you have always, since you were three years old, ridden in your own carriage?"

"But of course," Lucien repeated, laughing. "Why these questions?"

"Because I am surprised to find you neither absurd nor heartless. But let's hope that will come. You ought to see by the result of your mission that society resents your qualities. If you had been satisfied to get yourself covered with mud at Blois, the Minister would have presented you with the Cross on your return."

"Devil take me if I ever think of that cursed mission again!"

"You are wrong. It is the most valuable and the most curious experience of your life. Never, no matter what happens to you, will you ever forget General Fari, M. de Séranville, the Abbé Le Canu, M. de Riquebourg . . ."

"Never!"

"Well, the most trying part of the experience, morally, is over. Now begins the interpretation of the events. It will be interesting to follow in the different departments of the Ministry the fate of the men and the things still so fresh in your memory. But you must hurry, for it is very possible that the Minister has already some scheme up his sleeve for getting rid of you without offending your father."

"Speaking of my father, you knew, didn't you, that he is Deputy for Aveyron? He was elected after the third ballot by the flattering majority of two votes."

"You didn't tell me he was running."

"I thought it ridiculous. Besides, there wasn't much time to think about it. I learned it from my mother's letter brought by the special courier who had such a harrowing effect on M. de Séranville."

Two days later M. de Vaize said to Lucien:

"Here is a paper I should like you to glance at."

It was the first list of rewards in connection with the elections. Handing the paper to Lucien, the Minister smiled with an air of smug benevolence that seemed to say: "You have done nothing worth mentioning and yet see how I am treating you!" Lucien read over the list. There were three rewards of ten thousand francs with the word *successful* after the name of each recipient. On the fourth line appeared: "M. Leuwen, Master of Petitions, *unsuccessful*, M. Mairobert elected by a majority of one vote, but remarkable zeal displayed, a valuable subject: eight thousand francs."

"Well," said the Minister, "what do you say? Is that keeping the promise I made to you at the Opera?"

On the list, Lucien noticed, the few other agents who had been unsuccessful received only twenty-five hundred francs. After thanking the Minister, he added:

"I have a request to make, Your Excellency. It is that my name should not appear on the list."

"Ah," said the Minister, his face suddenly assuming an expression of the utmost sternness. "I understand. You expected the Cross. But really, after all your follies, I can hardly ask that for you. Your character is even younger than your age. Ask Desbacs of the amazement caused by your dispatches, coming one after the other, and then by your letters."

"It is because I know all that, that I beg Your Excellency not to consider me for the Cross, much less for a reward."

"Take care, sir," said the Minister, really angry now. "I

might take you at your word. Egad, sir, here is a pen—write down whatever you wish after your name.”

Lucien wrote opposite his name: “*Neither Cross, nor reward, election a failure*”; then crossed out the whole line. At the bottom of the list he wrote: “M. Coffe, twenty-five hundred francs.”

“Take care,” the Minister repeated when he read what Lucien had written. “I am taking this paper to the Château. After that it will be useless for your father to bring up the subject again.”

“No doubt Your Excellency’s many important duties have made you forget our conversation at the Opera. I very explicitly expressed the desire that in the future my father should in no way be involved in my political career.”

“Very well, sir. But kindly tell my friend, M. Leuwen, exactly what has taken place in the matter of the rewards. You were put down for eight thousand francs. You yourself effaced that figure. Good-day, sir.”

His Excellency’s carriage had hardly left the Ministry when Lucien was summoned by Madame la Comtesse de Vaize.

“The devil,” said Lucien to himself as he saw her, “how pretty she is today. She seems less timid and there is a new sparkle in her eye. What is the meaning of this change?”

“You have treated us badly since your return, M. Leuwen. I have been waiting for an opportunity to speak to you on a certain matter in particular. No one at the Ministry, I assure you, defended your dispatches more warmly than I, and I never allowed anyone to say a word against them at my table—which, you must own, was courageous of me! After all, anyone can make a mistake, and I have good news for you. Your enemies must not be allowed to use your mission as an excuse to slander you, and although money, I know very well, is no object to you, they must be silenced. This morning I made my husband promise that he would present your name to the King

for a reward of eight thousand francs. I wanted ten, but M. de Vaize explained that such a sum was reserved exclusively for outstanding successes. The letters which arrived from M. de Séranville yesterday are terrible for you! To counterbalance them I laid stress upon your father having been elected Deputy. M. de Vaize has had the list on which your name appeared at the very end for only four thousand francs, copied, so that now your name comes fourth, and is followed by the sum of eight thousand francs."

All this was said in many more words and, consequently, with greater reserve and feminine modesty, but also with many more marks of regard and interest than we can possibly note here. Lucien was touched, for in the last two weeks he had seen few friendly faces. He had begun to learn something of the ways of the world—at twenty-four it was about time!

"I should really make love to this timid little woman," Lucien thought to himself. "Dignities bore her, are really a burden to her. I would be her consolation. Her apartments are but a step from my office."

Lucien now told her how he had effaced his name from the list.

"My God!" she cried. "Are you crazy? I promise that you shall have the Cross at the very first opportunity."

"Which means," thought Lucien, "'Are you going to leave us?'"

The tone in which it was said touched Lucien so deeply that he was on the point of kissing her hand. Madame de Vaize seemed much affected, Lucien filled with gratitude. Her sweet face, which expressed such friendliness, was all the more touching to Lucien since, during his mission, he had seen nothing but hate in the faces around him.

"But if I attached myself to her," he thought, "what boring dinners I should have to endure, with that face of her husband at the other end of the table and her cousin, that rascally little

Desbacs, always around." This reflection took less than half a second.

"Yes, I have effaced my name from the list. But, since you are good enough to take an interest in my future, I shall tell you my real reason. These lists of rewards may one day be published, and at that moment such celebrity may prove to be anything but pleasant. I am too young to expose myself to such a dangerous eventuality."

"Oh, God," cried Madame de Vaize with an accent of terror. "Do you really agree with M. Crapart? You think the Republic as imminent as that!"

Madame de Vaize's face expressed more than fear, it revealed, Lucien thought, an utterly mediocre soul.

"Fear," he said to himself, "makes her forget her fugitive sympathy and friendliness. In this age, privileges are dearly bought, and Gauthier was right to pity any man called *Prince*. He wouldn't, he said, admit this opinion to everybody for fear of being accused of abject envy. 'In this year of 1834,' I remember his saying, 'a young man, not yet as old as the century, who bears the title of prince or duke, is bound to have a touch of madness. Because of his name the poor fellow lives in constant fear, yet thinks he ought to be happier than other men.' This pathetic little woman would be much happier if she were plain Madame Le Roux. . . . To Madame de Chasteller, on the contrary, such thoughts of danger gave a charming glow of courage. I remember that evening when something led me to say: 'Then I should be fighting against you.' What a look in her eyes! . . . And what the devil am I doing in Paris? Why shouldn't I fly to Nancy? I shall beg her on my knees to forgive me for having been angry with her because she kept her secret from me. What a painful admission for a woman to make to a young man—especially to one whom, *perhaps*, she loved! Why should she have confessed? Had I ever spoken of uniting our lives before the world?"

"Are you angry?" Madame de Vaize asked timidly.

The sound of her voice roused Lucien.

"She is no longer frightened," he thought. "My God, I must have been silent for a whole minute at least."

"How long have I been dreaming?" he asked.

"Three whole minutes," Madame de Vaize replied with extreme gentleness; but in that very gentleness, intentionally stressed, could be detected the reproof of a powerful Minister's wife, unaccustomed to such absent-mindedness in company, and much less in a tête-à-tête.

"The reason is, Madam, that I am on the point of entertaining for you a sentiment for which I reproach myself."

After this bit of knavery, Lucien had nothing more to say to Madame de Vaize. He added a few courteous phrases, left her covered with blushes, and went to lock himself up in his office.

"I forget to live," he said to himself. "These absurdities of ambition prevent me from thinking of the only thing in the world that has any reality for me. I sacrifice my heart to my ambition and I have no ambition. How absurd! I am not altogether ridiculous, however, for I have been trying to give my father a proof of my gratitude. But there are limits! If I leave, people may think that I am piqued at not having obtained a promotion or the Cross! My enemies at the Ministry will perhaps say that I went to see the republicans in Nancy. And the telegraph I made talk so much will talk about me. But," he added, laughing, "why mention that diabolic machine?"

After his resolve to go to Nancy Lucien felt like a man again.

"I shall have to wait a few days for my father's return. It is my duty, and, besides, I shall be glad to have his opinion on my conduct at Caen, so ridiculed at the Ministry."

That evening his determination not to appear crestfallen made him extremely brilliant at Madame Grandet's. In the



little oval drawing room, surrounded by thirty people, he was the center of the general conversation, and stopped all private chats for twenty minutes at least.

This success electrified Madame Grandet.

"With two or three moments like this every evening, mine will soon be the first salon of Paris."

When they went into the billiard room, she found herself standing beside Lucien, separated from the rest of the company. For a moment, while the men were busy choosing their cues, they were alone.

"And how did you spend your evenings in the provinces?"

"In thinking of a young woman in Paris I am desperately in love with."

It was the first word of the kind he had ever spoken to Madame Grandet, and came at a timely moment. For five minutes, at least, she let herself relish this remark before remembering the role she had decided to adopt in society. Ambition reacted violently, and, without having to make any effort, she was able to appear furious.

Fond words cost Lucien nothing at that moment. His mind had been filled with them ever since his decision to go to Nancy. For the entire evening he lavished all his tenderness on Madame Grandet.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

**M**LEUWEN returned from the Department of Aveyron thoroughly pleased with his election. "The weather was mild, the partridges excellent, full of savor, and the men incredible. One of my honorable constituents has commissioned me to send him four pairs

of well-made boots. I am to begin by comparing the merits of the different bootmakers of Paris. The boots must be elegantly fashioned, but at the same time sturdy. After finding the perfect bootmaker, I am to give him the old boot which M. de Malpas has entrusted to my care. There is also the matter of a branch road of five quarters of a league from the royal highway to the country house of another valuable constituent, M. Castenet, which I have engaged to obtain for him from the Minister of the Interior. Fifty-three commissions in all, besides all those that I have been promised by letter."

M. Leuwen went on to describe to Madame Leuwen and his son the clever means he had employed to obtain the triumphant majority of two votes.

"It was all very amusing and had my wife been with me, I should have been perfectly happy. It's been years since I have talked so much and to such a quantity of bores. I am saturated through and through with official boredom and all the platitudes I've heard, and also uttered about our government. None of those ninnies of the *Juste-milieu*, who repeat the sayings of Guizot and Thiers without understanding them, could ever repay me in écus for the mortal boredom their presence inspires. After I leave such people I am stupid for an hour or more afterward—I even bore myself."

"If only," put in Madame Leuwen, "they were greater rascals but less chauvinistic, they might be less boring."

"And now," said M. Leuwen, turning to his son, "tell me all about your adventures in Champagnier and Caen."

"Do you want a long or a short story?"

"Long," cried Madame Leuwen. "It amused me vastly and I could hear it again with pleasure. I am curious to know what your father will think of it."

"Very well," said M. Leuwen with a mock air of resignation, "it is now ten-forty-five; we'll have some punch, and you can go ahead with your story."

Maclame Leuwen motioned to the footman, and the door was closed. Lucien disposed of the outrage at Blois and the Champagnier election in five minutes. ("It was at Caen that I really needed your advice.") Then, at great length, he recounted to his father all that we, at great length, have recounted to our readers.

In the middle of his recital, M. Leuwen began to ask questions.

"More details, more details," he cried. "There's no originality or truth except in details. . . ."

Finally, at half-past-twelve, M. Leuwen remarked:

"So that is how your Minister treated you on your return!" He seemed violently incensed.

"But tell me," his son insisted, "how did I act, well or ill? The truth is, I don't know. On the field of battle, in the excitement of action, I thought I was a thousand times right, but now I am assailed by a multitude of doubts."

"And I," said Madame Leuwen, "I haven't any. You acted as the bravest man would have done. At forty you might have been a little more cautious in your behavior toward that little literary Prefect, for the animosity of writers is almost as dangerous as that of priests. On the other hand, at forty you would also have shown less energy and boldness in your handling of MM. Disjonval and Le Canu. . . ."

Madame Leuwen seemed to be soliciting the approval of her silent husband, to be pleading her son's cause.

"I must rebel against my champion," said Lucien. "What's done is done, and I don't care a straw for the Brid'oison of the Rue de Grenelle. But my pride is uneasy; what opinion should I have of myself? Am I worth anything? That," he turned to his father, "is what I want you to tell me. I don't ask if you are fond of me, or what you would say about me in society. But, as I may have twisted the facts in my favor in recounting them, thus justifying, according to them, the meas-

ures I adopted, I want you to hear M. Coffe's account as well as mine—and let me assure you, sir, he is never boring."

"He strikes me as a most disagreeable person," said Madame Leuwen.

"You are mistaken, mother. It is only that he is disgusted. If he had an income of four hundred francs, he would retire to the rocks of Sainte-Baume, a few leagues from Marseilles."

"Why doesn't he become a monk?"

"He believes that there is no God, or, if there is one, that He is wicked."

"Not so stupid!" put in M. Leuwen.

"Oh," cried Madame Leuwen, "he is even worse than I thought! That confirms me in my dislike."

"Then I have been very clumsy," rejoined Lucien, "for I wanted to get my father's consent to listen to the account of my campaign by a faithful aide-de-camp who did not always see eye to eye with me. And I shall never succeed in getting another session with my father if you don't second me."

"Not at all; this interests me. It reminds me of my recent laurels at Aveyron, where I had five legitimist adherents myself, and two of them, at least, thought themselves damned for taking the oath. But I swore that I would speak against the oath, and so I shall, for it is highway robbery."

"Oh, my dear, this is exactly what I feared," said Madame Leuwen. "Think of your weak chest."

"I shall sacrifice myself for my country and my two ultras! It was their confessor, at my instigation, who ordered them to take the oath and to vote for me. If your Coffe wants to dine with us tomorrow . . . Are we free tomorrow?" he asked, turning to his wife.

"We have a tentative engagement with Madame de Thémines. . . ."

"We'll dine here—the three of us and M. Coffe. If he is

the boring kind, as I fear, he will be less boring at table. We'll be out to everyone else, and Anselme will serve us."

Lucien persuaded Coffe to come, but not without some difficulty.

"You will find a dinner that would cost forty francs a plate at Baleine's Rocher de Cancale, and, even at that price, it's doubtful whether Baleine's dinner would be as good."

"Well, then, let's sample your forty franc dinner, by all means. It's just about the price of my board for a month."

Coffe made the conquest of M. Leuwen by his reserve and the simplicity of his recital.

"Ah, my dear sir, how grateful I am to you for not being a Gascon!" said the Deputy from Aveyron. "I've had an overdose of those bumptious fellows who are always sure of tomorrow's success until tomorrow arrives, then, when reproached with their failure, dish you up a platitude."

M. Leuwen asked Coffe a great many questions. Madame Leuwen was delighted to have this third edition of her son's exploits. And at nine o'clock, when Coffe was preparing to leave, M. Leuwen insisted on taking him with him to his box at the Opera.

"I am sorry that you are at the Ministry," M. Leuwen said to him before the evening was over. "I would have offered you a position at four thousand francs. Since poor Van Peters' death, I don't work enough, and, besides, since the Minister's stupid behavior toward this hero of ours, I have a sneaking desire to start a semi-opposition for six weeks. I don't feel at all sure of succeeding. My reputation for wit will frighten my colleagues, and I can't succeed without a squad of fifteen or twenty Deputies. . . . True, I shall be careful that my opinions do not disturb theirs. No matter what imbecilities they desire, I shall think as they do and say so. . . . But, by gad, Monsieur de Vaize, you are going to pay for your stupid blundering in regard to this young hero! As your banker, financial revenge

would be beneath me. . . . Revenge is always costly to the avenger. . . ." M. Leuwen still spoke aloud, but as though to himself. "I cannot sacrifice one iota of my integrity as a banker. Thus, whenever the opportunity occurs, there will be the same profitable transactions on the Bourse as though we were still the best of friends. . . ." And he fell into a brown study. Lucien, who was beginning to find the political session a little long, just then caught sight of Mademoiselle Raimonde in a fifth tier box and disappeared.

"To arms!" cried M. Leuwen, suddenly coming out of his reverie and addressing Coffe. "We must get to work. . . . What time is it now?"

"I have no watch," Coffe replied stiffly. "Your son got me out of Sainte-Pélagie . . . and," Coffe's vanity could not resist adding, "in my schedule of bankruptcy I included my watch."

"Very honest, very honest, my dear Coffe," Leuwen replied absently. Then he added with great earnestness: "Can I count on your eternal silence? I must ask you never to pronounce my name or that of my son."

"That is my usual practice. I promise you."

"Will you do me the honor of dining with me tomorrow? If there are other people, I shall have our dinner served in my room; there will be just the three of us, my son, you and myself. Your sound, firm judgment pleases me, and I am most anxious to find favor with you, in spite of your misanthropy—that is, if you are a misanthrope."

"Yes, from having loved men too well."

Two weeks later the change that had come over M. Leuwen amazed his friends. He was constantly in the society of thirty or forty of the newly elected Deputies who were among the most idiotic in the Chamber. And what was even more incredible, he never exercised his wit at their expense. A cer-

tain diplomat among M. Leuwen's friends expressed his consternation: "He is no longer insolent toward imbeciles! He talks to them seriously. His character is changing. We are losing him."

"At last," M. de Vaize said to himself, "I've got the better of the audacious fellow." And he rubbed his hands with satisfaction. "I've brought him down a peg. All it needed was a little courage. I didn't make his son a Lieutenant, and now he eats humble pie."

The outcome of this happy reasoning was a little air of superiority which he adopted toward M. Leuwen, and which M. Leuwen noticed with great glee. As M. de Vaize, for a very good reason, did not surround himself with clever men, he was not aware of the astonishment caused by the change that had come over M. Leuwen, among those busy, brilliant men who make their fortunes out of the government in power.

The men of wit who had been in the habit of dining at M. Leuwen's were no longer invited. He gave them one or two dinners at a restaurant. He no longer invited any women, but every day five or six Deputies dined at his table. Madame Leuwen could not get over her amazement. He would say the strangest things to his Deputies, such as:

"This dinner—and let me say that I hope you will accept my hospitality any time you are not invited by one of the Ministers or the King—this dinner would cost more than twenty francs a person in the best restaurant in Paris. . . . For example, this turbot . . ."

Whereupon there followed the history of the turbot with the amount it had cost (invented on the spur of the moment, for he knew nothing of such things).

"But last Monday," he would add, "this same turbot, when I say this same turbot—naturally this one was still swimming around in the British Channel—I mean a turbot of the same weight and just as fresh, cost at least ten francs."

He was careful to avoid meeting his wife's eye when he expatiated on such interesting subjects.

Very skillfully, M. Leuwen contrived to hold the attention of his Deputies. He would generally take them into his confidence on such subjects as the extraordinary turbot, and when he told anecdotes they were about cab drivers who at midnight take imprudent Paris visitors, venturing to return home at such an hour and unfamiliar with the streets, out into the country.

Madame Leuwen's astonishment knew no bounds, but she dared not question her husband for she felt sure he would merely answer with a jest.

All the mental power of his Deputies M. Leuwen reserved for one abstruse idea, which he made them grasp by means of a thousand different examples, sometimes even bravely presenting it to them directly:

"In union there is strength. If this principle is universally true, it is, above all, true for deliberative bodies. There is no exception, unless there happens to be a Mirabeau in the Chamber. But which one of us is a Mirabeau? Not I *for one!* We can make ourselves count only if none of us insists upon holding stubbornly to his own point of view. We are twenty friends banded together. Very well. It is necessary for each one of us to think as the majority—that is as eleven of us think. Tomorrow an article of law comes up for discussion in the Chamber. After dinner let us take up this measure for discussion among ourselves. I have but one advantage over the rest of you in that, for the last forty years, I have been studying the perfidious practices of this city of Paris. But I shall always sacrifice my opinion to that of the majority of my friends. After all, four eyes are better than two. We are now about to deliberate on how we shall vote tomorrow. If there are twenty of us present, as I hope, and eleven vote *yes*, the nine others must absolutely vote *yes*, no matter how passionately they are wedded to *no*. That is the secret of our strength. If ever we



should succeed in mustering thirty votes on every question, there is no favor the Ministers can refuse us. Let us now make a little memorandum of the thing each one of us would like to obtain for his family (I speak of things within reason). When each of us has obtained, through the Ministers' fear of us, a favor of approximately the same value, we will pass on to a second list. Now, gentlemen, what do you say to this plan of campaign?"

M. Leuwen had deliberately chosen, as subjects for the indoctrination of his theory and recipients of his hospitality, the twenty Deputies who were the most destitute of friends and connections, the most amazed by their sojourn in Paris, and by nature the dullest. They were almost all either from the Midi, Auvergne, or somewhere along the Perpignan-Bordeaux line. The only exception was M. N—— from Nancy, introduced by his son. M. Leuwen's greatest difficulty was to keep from offending their vanity, and even though he invariably gave in to them on every subject, he was not always successful. There was a mocking twist to the corner of his mouth which alarmed them. Several, thinking he was making fun of them, declined his dinners. These he replaced very happily by Deputies who had at least three sons and four daughters, and who were bent on finding good posts for all their sons and their sons-in-law.

About a month after the opening of the Chamber, and after twenty or more dinners, he decided that his little troop was sufficiently seasoned to take the field. One day, after an excellent dinner, he had them solemnly vote on a question of very minor importance which was to be debated the following day. In spite of all the trouble he had taken to make them understand, using the most indirect style possible and displaying the utmost caution, out of nineteen Deputies, twelve voted on the absurd side of the question. M. Leuwen had promised them in advance that he would speak in the Chamber next day in

favor of the majority opinion. Nevertheless, confronted by such absurdity, he had the human weakness to try to enlighten this majority by a careful exposition which lasted a whole hour and a half. He was driven back with loss, when his Deputies appealed to his conscience. Valiantly, the following day for his maiden speech in the Chamber, he supported a glaring imbecility. He was properly vilified in practically all the newspapers without exception, but won the endless gratitude of his little troop.

We suppress the details, also endless, of his careful tutelage of the consciences of his flock of faithful Perigordians, Auvergnians, etc. He was determined that no one should seduce them, and he even, on occasion, went with them to look for lodgings or to one of those tailors who sell ready-made trousers in the arcades. If he had dared, he would have lodged them as well as practically boarding them.

Thanks to these daily efforts which, because of their extreme novelty, amused him, in a very short time he had mustered twenty-nine votes. He then decided never to invite to his dinners any Deputies outside his group of twenty-nine, and almost every day of the session he brought back a huge berlin full of them. One of his journalist friends, pretending to attack him, proclaimed the existence of a *Southern Legion*, twenty-nine votes strong. "But," inquired the journalist, "is it the Ministry that pays for this new Piet club?"

The day before the *Southern Legion* was, for the second time, to have occasion to show itself, to *reveal its existence*, as M. Leuwen said to them, he had them debate again after dinner. True to instinct, out of twenty-nine present, nineteen were once more for the absurd side of the question. Next day M. Leuwen ascended the rostrum and spoke in its favor. It won by a majority of eight votes. Fresh diatribes in the press against the *Southern Legion*.

M. Leuwen entreated his Deputies to address the Chamber

themselves, but in vain. None of them dared. In truth none of them could. Having friends in the Ministry of Finance, M. Leuwen was able to obtain for his followers one postmaster's place in a village of Languedoc and two tobacco shop concessions. Three days later, with the excuse that there wasn't time enough, he avoided a debate on a question in which one of the Ministers took a personal interest.

Next day this Minister arrived in the Chamber in full regalia, radiant and very sure of a successful outcome. He went around shaking hands with his principal friends, received others at his bench, and, turning toward the bench of his followers, gave them an ingratiating smile. The Chairman reported the bill and declared in favor of the Minister. A rabid *Juste-milieu* succeeded him, and seconded the Chairman. The Chamber was bored and about to approve the bill by a large majority. M. Leuwen's Deputies, not knowing what side to take, turned toward his place next to the Ministers. This time, his opinion untrammelled by his *Legion*, M. Leuwen ascended the rostrum and, in spite of his weak voice, obtained a religious attention. True, he managed to get in three or four witty and malicious strokes in the very beginning of his speech. The first made fifteen or twenty Deputies around the rostrum smile, the second brought a scattering of laughs and produced a general murmur of amusement. The Chamber was waking up. At the third, a great burst of laughter fairly shook the hall. The Minister, who wanted the bill to pass, asked for the floor and spoke, but without any success. Accustomed to obtaining the attention of the Chamber, M. de Vaize now came to his colleague's rescue. That was exactly what M. Leuwen had been praying for these past two months. He went over to one of the Deputies to ask him to yield his turn. As M. de Vaize in his speech had answered one of Leuwen's jibes rather well, Leuwen demanded the floor on a personal issue. The Speaker

refused. M. Leuwen protested, and the Chamber accorded him the floor.

This second speech was a triumph. M. Leuwen gave free reign to his spite and got in several thrusts at M. de Vaize, which were all the more cruel for being couched in such a way as to preclude any reply. M. Leuwen's voice was exceedingly weak, and you could have heard a pin drop in the hall all the while he was speaking. It was a success similar to those the amiable Andrieux formerly enjoyed at the public meetings of the Academy. M. de Vaize fairly writhed on his bench and made frantic signs to the rich bankers, one after the other, who were Deputies and friends of M. Leuwen. He was in a rage, and spoke of challenging Leuwen.

"You want to fight against such a voice!" the Minister of War protested. "If you killed that old man, opprobrium would fall on the whole Ministry."

M. Leuwen's success surpassed his wildest hopes. His speech was the outburst of the bitter resentment he had kept pent up for the last two months. And during all that time, for the sake of vengeance, he had endured the dreariest boredom. His speech—if such a wicked, racy, charming diatribe, quite devoid of common sense, can be called a speech—marked the most agreeable session the Chamber had so far enjoyed. After it, no one could get himself listened to.

It was only four-thirty. The Deputies stood about talking for a few moments and then departed, leaving the Speaker alone with the ponderous *Juste-milieu* Deputy who had tried to confute M. Leuwen's brilliant improvisation by sensible arguments. M. Leuwen went home and to bed. He was horribly tired. But, toward nine o'clock in the evening, he felt somewhat revived and gave orders that he was at home to callers. Congratulations poured in. Deputies who had never spoken to him before came to shake his hand and compliment him.

"Tomorrow, if you will give me the floor," he said to them, "I shall effectively dispose of the subject, once and for all."

"But, my dear," protested Madame Leuwen, very much worried, "are you trying to kill yourself?"

Most of the journalists came during the evening to ask to see his speech. He showed them a playing card on which he had written five ideas to be developed. When the journalists saw that the speech had indeed been improvised, their admiration knew no bounds. The name of Mirabeau was pronounced without a smile.

Responding to this praise with charming wit, M. Leuwen feigned to regard it as an insult.

"You are still addressing the Chamber!" exclaimed a clever journalist. "And, by gad, it's not going to be lost. I have a good memory."

And sitting down at a table he began scribbling what M. Leuwen had just said. Seeing that he would be published right away, M. Leuwen added three or four sarcasms on M. de Vaize which had occurred to him after leaving the Chamber.

A little later the stenographer from the *Moniteur* came to bring him his speech for corrections.

"We always do this for General Foy."

The remark enchanted our author.

"This will relieve me of the necessity of speaking tomorrow," he thought, as he added to his speech five or six sentences in which he set forth with great clarity the opinion he wished to urge.

What was comical to watch was the rapture of the Deputies of his troop, who, all evening long, were witnesses of his triumph. Each of them was convinced that he himself had spoken. They kept coming to him with arguments which he should have advanced, and he, with perfect seriousness, agreed with them.

"In a month," he would whisper to one, "your son will be

an exciseman." To another: "Your son will be chief clerk in one of the departments of the Sub-Prefecture."

The next morning Lucien cut a strange figure in his office only a few feet away from the desk where the Minister, in a rage, no doubt, sat writing. His Excellency could not help hearing the commotion in the corridor made by the twenty or thirty clerks come to congratulate Lucien on his father's talents.

M. de Vaize was beside himself. Although he was in need of Lucien's services, he could not bring himself to see him. Toward two o'clock he departed for the Château. Hardly had he left when the young Comtesse de Vaize sent for Lucien.

"Ah, sir, do you really want to ruin us? The Minister is almost out of his mind, he never closed his eyes all night. You shall have your lieutenancy, you shall have your Cross, only give us time!"

The Comtesse herself looked very pale. Lucien was charming to her, almost tender. He consoled her as best he could, and convinced her that he had not had the faintest idea of his father's attack, which was true.

"I swear to you, Madam, for the past six weeks my father has not spoken a serious word to me. Since my lengthy account of my adventures at Caen, we have discussed nothing."

"Ah, Caen, that fatal name! M. de Vaize realizes how much he has been at fault. He should have rewarded you very differently. But today, he says, it is impossible after such an appalling declaration of war."

"Perhaps, Madam," said Lucien very gently, "it will be distressing to have the son of an opposition Deputy always around. If my resignation would be agreeable to your husband . . ."

"Oh, sir," Madame de Vaize interrupted him, "do not think of such a thing! My husband would never forgive me for having been so maladroit as to make you pronounce that word, so distressing for us both. On the contrary, it is a question of

conciliation, and no matter what your father says, you must not desert us!"

And this pretty young woman began to weep without restraint.

There was never a victory, even a parliamentary victory, that did not start tears flowing.

Lucien did his best to console the young Comtesse, being careful, nevertheless, to make the distinction between what he owed a pretty woman and what he wished to have recounted to the man who had treated him so cavalierly on his return from Caen. For it was evident that the young woman was talking to him on her husband's order.

"My father is in love with politics," he explained to her once more. "He spends his whole time with boring Deputies. For six weeks he has not spoken a serious word to me."

Following his triumph, M. Leuwen stayed in bed for a week. A day would have sufficed to rest him completely, but he knew his country, where charlatanism added to real merit is like a zero placed after a number, increasing its value tenfold. In his bed, M. Leuwen received the congratulations of over fifty members of the Chamber. He refused the requests of eight or ten Deputies, not devoid of ability, who asked to be enrolled in the *Southern Legion*.

"We are really just a group of friends, rather than a political club. . . . Vote with us, second us during the session, and if your fancy, which is an honor to us, lasts until next year, these gentlemen, accustomed to seeing you share our point of view, will themselves invite you to join our friendly dinners."

"Even to manage my twenty-eight goslings," thought M. Leuwen, "requires the height of abnegation and all my skill. What would it be if there were forty or fifty, and clever ones at that, each wanting to be my lieutenant and bent on ousting his Captain at the first opportunity?"

One thing that made for the novelty of M. Leuwen's posi-

tion, and his popularity, was that he dined his colleagues at his own expense. This was something which, in the memory of the Chamber, had never happened before. There had been the famous dinners of M. Piet during the Restoration, but for them the State had paid.

Two days after M. Leuwen's success, the telegraph brought news from Spain which would undoubtedly cause a fall in the Funds. The Minister hesitated, considering whether or not he should, as usual, send the information to his banker.

"It would be an added triumph for him," M. de Vaize said to himself, "if I showed that I was so piqued that I even neglected my own interests. . . . But, wait a moment! Would he be capable of betraying me? No, I hardly think so."

He sent for Lucien and, scarcely daring to meet his eyes, asked him to transmit the information to his father. The transaction was handled as usual. Two days later, when M. Leuwen sent M. de Vaize the latest profits, he took this occasion to include that of four previous operations, thus practically clearing the Minister's account with the banking house of Leuwen.

M. Leuwen's speeches hardly deserved that name. They were not elevated, they did not affect a tone of gravity, they were only clever society chatter, rapid and pungent. M. Leuwen had a horror of the periphrastic parliamentary style.

"Such grandiloquence would kill me," he remarked to Lucien one day. "First of all I could no longer improvise, and then I should have to work. I wouldn't join the literary clan for an empire! . . . I never dreamed that success was so easy."

Coffe now stood in high favor with the illustrious Deputy, entirely due to that one great virtue of his: he was not a Gascon. M. Leuwen employed Coffe on research, whereupon M. de Vaize dismissed him from his post of a hundred louis at the Ministry of the Interior.



"That is in the worst possible taste," said M. Leuwen, and promptly sent Coffe four thousand francs.

The second time M. Leuwen left the house it was to go to call on the Minister of Finance, whom he had known for a long time.

"Well," said the Minister, laughing, "are you about to make a speech against me?"

"I certainly shall, unless you repair the stupidity of your colleague, M. de Vaize."

And he told the Minister of Finance the story of the highly endowed M. Coffe.

The Minister, who was a sensible and practical man, refrained from asking questions about M. Coffe.

"I am told that M. de Vaize employed your son in the elections, and that it was young M. Leuwen who was attacked in the riot at Blois."

"He had that honor," replied M. Leuwen dryly.

"I did not see his name on the list of rewards submitted to the Council."

"My son effaced his name and put down M. Coffe for a hundred louis. But poor Coffe isn't happy at the Ministry of the Interior."

"Our worthy de Vaize is a capable man and speaks well in the Chamber, but he is altogether lacking in tact. What a splendid economy he has achieved at M. Coffe's expense!"

A week later M. Coffe was appointed Deputy Assistant Head Clerk at the Ministry of Finance with a salary of six thousand francs, but on the express condition that he should never appear at the Ministry.

"Are you satisfied?" the Minister of Finance asked M. Leuwen in the Chamber.

"Yes, with you."

Two weeks later, after a debate in which the Minister of the Interior had just enjoyed a signal success, the Chamber,

before the voting began, buzzed with conversation, and all around M. Leuwen everyone was saying:

"A majority of eighty or a hundred votes for the government!"

M. Leuwen at that moment ascended the rostrum. He began by referring to his age and his weak voice. Instantly there was a profound silence. After making a terse and logical speech of ten minutes, he spent five holding M. de Vaize's arguments up to ridicule, while murmurs of amusement ran through the intensely silent Chamber.

"Vote! Vote!" shouted three or four *Juste-milieu* imbeciles, employed as hecklers.

"Very well, Mr. Hecklers," replied M. Leuwen, "I dare you to! And in order to give you time enough to vote, I shall go back to my place." As he passed by the Ministers' bench he cried in his feeble little voice: "Vote, gentlemen, vote!"

The whole Chamber and the galleries burst into a roar of laughter. In vain the Speaker insisted that it was too late to vote.

"*It is not yet five o'clock,*" cried M. Leuwen from his bench. "Besides, if you do not want to let us vote, I shall have more to say tomorrow. Vote, vote!"

The Speaker was forced to allow the voting to proceed, and the Ministry won by a majority of only a *single vote*.

That evening the Ministers dined together and gave M. de Vaize a proper dressing down. The Minister of Finance took the initiative. He told his colleagues of the Coffe episode and the riot at Blois. . . . Throughout the dinner, M. Leuwen and his son occupied the attention of these grave personages. M. de Beausobre, the Foreign Minister, and M. de Vaize were strongly opposed to any reconciliation. The others laughed at them, and made them admit everything—the incident with M. de Beausobre over the Kortis affair, and the election of Caen, ill-paid by M. de Vaize. Finally, despite the indignation of the two

Ministers, to their *massimo dispetto*, that very evening, the Minister of War went to the King, and had two ordinances signed—the first naming Lucien Leuwen Staff-Lieutenant, the second awarding him the Cross for the injury sustained at Blois in carrying out a confidential mission!

At eleven the ordinances were signed, and before midnight M. Leuwen received copies, with an amiable note from the Minister of Finance. At one o'clock in the morning came an acknowledgment from M. Leuwen, in which he asked the Minister for eight little posts, and thanked him quite casually for the unprecedented favors accorded his son.

The next day in the Chamber, the Minister of Finance protested:

"My dear friend, one must not be insatiable!"

"In that case, my dear friend, one must be patient."

And M. Leuwen put himself down for a speech the following day. That evening he invited all his Deputies to dinner.

"Gentlemen," he said when they were seated at table, "here is a little list of the posts I have asked for you. The Minister of Finance thought he could silence me by giving my son the Cross. But if, before four o'clock tomorrow, we have not at least five of these posts which are so rightfully due you, we will use our twenty-nine black balls, as well as eleven others I have been promised, making forty in all. In addition, I intend to amuse myself at the expense of the worthy Ministers of the Interior and of Foreign Affairs, who were the only ones to oppose our demands. What do you think, gentlemen?"

Then, while ostensibly asking their opinions on the question to be debated the following day, he explained it to them.

At ten o'clock he went to the Opera. He had insisted upon his son's displaying the Cross on his uniform, which he never wore. While at the Opera M. Leuwen saw to it that the Minister was informed of his intention of speaking the next day

and of the forty votes already assured, without the information seeming to come from him.

The following afternoon in the Chamber, fifteen minutes before the subject for discussion was announced, the Minister of Finance told him that five posts had been accorded him.

"As far as I am concerned, Your Excellency's word is as good as gold," M. Leuwen coolly replied. "But my five Deputies, whose cause I have espoused—all of them family men—know that MM. de Beausobre and de Vaize are our sworn enemies. Without an official notice, I am afraid they may be skeptical."

"Leuwen, you go too far!" exclaimed the Minister, and he flushed up to the roots of his hair. "De Vaize is right, you would exasperate . . ."

"War it is then!" said Leuwen. And a quarter of an hour later he made another speech.

The question was put to a vote and the Ministry won by a majority of only thirty-seven votes which was considered most alarming. In addition, M. Leuwen enjoyed the signal honor of having the Council of Ministers, presided over by the King, deliberate on his account, and for a considerable length of time. Beausobre thought they might try giving him a scare.

"He is a man of moods," said the Minister of Finance, "as his associate Van Peters often told me. At times he displays the sanest views, but at others, to satisfy a whim, he would sacrifice his fortune and himself with it. If we irritate him it will only serve to increase his epigrammatic fury, and among the hundreds of crazy things he says he will make one damning point, or at least one that will be taken up as such by the King's enemies."

"We can get at him through his son," M. de Beausobre insisted. "That solemn little fool they have just made a Lieutenant."

"It was not *they*, sir," cried the Minister of War, "it was I who made him a Lieutenant. And I think by profession I

might be considered a judge of courage. It may be that when he was a Second-Lieutenant of Lancers he was not *very polite* at your house one evening, when he came looking for M. de Vaize to report on the Kortis affair, which, *I must say*, he handled remarkably well."

"Not very polite!" cried M. de Beausobre. "Why, he's a rapscallion. . . ."

"*They* say: not very polite," repeated the Minister of War, emphasizing the *they*. "*They* even add certain details, such as an offer of resignation. *They* have described the entire scene, and to persons who have good memories!"

And the old warrior's voice rose angrily.

"It seems to me," interposed the King, "that there are times and places when it would be preferable to discuss things reasonably without raising one's voice."

"Sire," said the Comte de Beausobre, "the respect I owe Your Majesty silences me. But anywhere else . . ."

"Your Excellency will find my address in the royal almanac," retorted the Minister of War.

Such scenes were of monthly occurrence in the Council. The combination of the four letters KING had lost all its magic power in Paris.

A group of semi-fools, then called the *Dynastic Opposition*, which let itself be guided by a few men of vacillating spirit who *could* have been, but did not *wish* to be, Ministers of Louis-Philippe, sent overtures to M. Leuwen. He was profoundly astonished.

"So there are people who actually take my parliamentary chatter seriously! Have I really some influence then, some weight? It must be so, since a large party, or rather a large fraction of the Chamber, proposes a treaty of alliance with me."

For the first time in his life, M. Leuwen was filled with parliamentary ambition. But, as this seemed to him ridiculous,

## *THE TELEGRAPH*

he was ashamed to speak of it to his wife who, until then, had shared his every thought.

"I entrust to your mother, my dear Lucien, the painful duty of scolding you when necessary. I think, having put you in a position to receive some honorable saber scars, I have done all that can be demanded of a good father. You are familiar with life in a regiment; you are familiar with life in the provinces; do you prefer life in Paris? Command us, my Prince. There is only one thing we will not agree to, and that is marriage."

"I assure you, father, there is no question of that."

M. Leuwen to his son on another occasion: "Your words betray your feelings too plainly. You are not without wit, but you talk too freely of what you feel too strongly. That encourages all the knaves. You should always try to entertain people by talking of things that don't interest you in the least."

\*

\*

\*

When office work is proposed: "Very well," he (Lucien) said to himself, "I shall at least learn a trade which will supply me with my daily bread, and I shall not win a horse merely, as Ernest says, because I have a rich father."

\*

\*

\*

"I didn't think you were so young. You are a pebble not yet rubbed smooth. At the first audience you gave yesterday you were a poet." [Coffe to Lucien after leaving the Prefecture of the Department of Cher.]

\*

\*

\*

To be incorporated: After eight months at the office, Lucien wrote letters that were too short, too clear, too exempt from ambiguous phrases, in other words, much too dangerous to sign. But he had a rare talent for getting things done, and could expedite more work than three of the best department heads together.

\*

\*

\*

It seemed to Lucien he had managed to speak in such a way that if his remarks were repeated, they would prove that he had not been privy to the suggestion of administering opium.

Leaving the Rue de Braque, Lucien, who had expected to be horribly unhappy until this affair was over, felt very well pleased with himself.

"I may be on the verge of public disgrace and death, but at least I have played my cards well."

\*

\*

\*

It remains to be decided: when should Mmes. de Chasteller and de Constantin appear (in Paris)?

#### DU POIRIER IN PARIS

ARRIVING in Paris, Du Poirier was completely dazzled by all the luxury. Soon a wild, unreasoning longing to enjoy some of this astonishing luxury took possession of him. He observed the admiration bestowed upon M. Berryer by the nobility and the great landowners. M. Passy was at home with all the complicated figures of the Budget. But the enormous majority of France, the people who want a badly paid *King Log*, were not represented.

"They won't be for a long time, either, for they can't elect a Deputy. And here am I for five years. I intend to be the O'Connell and the Cobbett of France. I'll stop at nothing, and I'll make an important, a unique place for myself. There's no danger of any rival appearing until the day when all the officers of the National Guard can vote . . . in ten years perhaps. I am fifty-two—later, come what may! I'll object that they have gone too far, and I'll sell myself for a lifetime sinecure, and rest on my laurels."

In two days' time the conversion of this new Saint Paul was decided, but the how of the matter was more difficult. He dreamed



about it for a week. The main thing was not to sacrifice religion.

At last he hit upon a banner the public could understand. *Words of a Believer* had enjoyed a great success the year before. Dr. Du Poirier adopted it as his gospel, had himself introduced to M. de Lamennais and displayed the keenest enthusiasm. I even wonder if this ill-bred disciple did not make the illustrious Breton regret his celebrity. Yet had not M. de Lamennais himself, after beginning as the Pope's adorer, become a lover of liberty? Great-hearted Liberty is sometimes a little absent-minded and forgets to ask: "Where did you come from?"

The day before in the Chamber, when attacked by the laughter of the right and the heavy sarcasms of the bourgeois aristocracy, with the aid of gestures and facial expression, Du Poirier had displayed sufficient skill to make them swallow this astonishing piece of egotism:

"I fully expect to be attacked for my way of expressing myself, of gesticulating, of ascending this rostrum. Underhanded warfare, all that! Yes, gentlemen, it is true, at the age of fifty-two I am seeing Paris for the first time. But where have I been spending those fifty-two years? Have I been buried in some provincial château, flattered by my lackeys and my notary, entertaining the priest at dinner? No, gentlemen, I have spent all those years learning to know men of all ranks, and in helping the poor. Inheriting a few thousand francs, I boldly sacrificed them to get an education.

"When I left the university at the age of twenty-two, I was a doctor, but I didn't have five hundred francs to my name. Today I am rich, but I have struggled for that fortune against talented, energetic competitors. I have made that fortune, gentlemen, not—like my fine adversaries—by just taking the trouble to get born, but by dint of visits at three sous, then three francs, then ten francs; and, to my shame, I confess that I never had time to learn how to dance! Now these fine gentlemen, these orators and accomplished dancers, make fun of the poor country doctor who has failed to acquire all the graces. Truly a memorable victory! While they were taking lessons in style, and in the art of talking without saying anything, after the manner of the *Athenaeum* or the *Académie Française*, I was visit-

ing huts high up in snow-covered mountains, and I became acquainted with the wants and the desires of the poor. I am here to represent one hundred thousand Frenchmen deprived of the right to vote with whom I have conversed all my life—but they make the terrible mistake of not being impressed by airs and graces.”

\*

\*

\*

Lucien, who had noticed Du Poirier's name among the new Deputies, was surprised one day to see him walk into his office. He embraced the doctor with emotion, and tears came to his eyes.

Du Poirier was disconcerted. For three days he had hesitated before coming to Lucien's office; on being announced he was terrified, his heart started beating violently. He trembled for fear the young officer had learned of the strange trick the doctor had played on him to get him out of Nancy.

“If he knows, he will kill me!”

Du Poirier possessed wit and method and a talent for intrigue, but he had the misfortune to be pitifully lacking in courage. His profound medical knowledge was made to serve his cowardice (a shortcoming most uncommon in France) and his imagination evoked all the tragic consequences of a punch in the jaw or a well-aimed kick in the posterior. For that was exactly the treatment he anticipated from Lucien. And for this reason, although he had been in Paris for ten days, he had not come to see Lucien before. For this reason also he had finally come to Lucien's office, which was more or less public, where he would be surrounded by clerks and other attendants, rather than to Lucien's home. The day before he had caught sight of Lucien on the boulevard, and had hurriedly turned tail, and ducked down the nearest side street.

“At least,” his caution prompted, “if a misfortune should befall me [he meant a punch or a kick] it's better to be in a room without witnesses than in the middle of the street. I can't very well remain in Paris without meeting him sooner or later.”

Suffice it to add that, despite his avarice and fear of firearms, the wily doctor had bought himself a pair of pistols which even at that very moment reposed in his pockets.

"During the elections, when so much bitterness is always aroused, M. Leuwen may well have received an anonymous letter. In that case . . ."

But Lucien embraced the doctor with tears in his eyes.

"Ah, he hasn't changed!" said Du Poirier to himself, and was thereupon filled with inexpressible contempt for our hero.

Seeing the doctor, Lucien immediately imagined himself back in Nancy, a stone's throw from the Rue de la Pompe. Only a very little while ago perhaps Du Poirier had talked with Madame de Chasteller! Lucien looked at him with the tenderest interest.

"But what can this mean?" Lucien asked himself. "He isn't dirty! He has a new suit, new trousers, a new hat, and new shoes! It's unheard of! What a change! How could he possibly bring himself to spend so much money?"

\*

\*

\*

Like all provincials, Du Poirier exaggerated the sagacity as well as the crimes of the police.

"This is a very lonely street," he said to Lucien. "What if the Minister I made fun of this morning in the Chamber should have me seized by four of his men and thrown into the river? I can't swim, and besides it doesn't take long to catch pneumonia."

"But his four men have wives, mistresses, cronies; they would gossip," replied Lucien. "Besides, do you really think that Ministers are such knaves?"

"They are capable of anything!" Du Poirier retorted warmly.

"Ah," thought Lucien, "there's no cure for fear." And he decided to escort the doctor to his door.

As they walked along the endless wall of a vast garden, the doctor's fear increased. Lucien felt his arm tremble.

"Are you armed?" he asked Lucien.

"If I tell him I have only my cane he is capable of fainting with terror, and I shall be here for an hour." So Lucien replied in a brisk military tone:

"Only my pistols and a dagger."

This completed the doctor's panic; Lucien could hear his teeth chattering.

"If this young officer knows the trick I played on him in Madame de Chasteller's anteroom, what a chance for revenge he has now!"

As they were going along a ditch which had overflowed during the recent rain, Lucien suddenly stepped to one side.

"Ah, sir," cried the doctor in heart-rending tones, "you wouldn't think of vengeance against an old man!"

"He is certainly crazy," thought Lucien.

"My dear Doctor, I realize that you like money, but if I were in your place I'd hire a carriage and resign myself to being less eloquent in the Chamber."

"That's what I keep telling myself," moaned the doctor, "but I can't help it; when I get an idea I feel myself drawn to that *rostrum* as though I were in love with it; I make eyes at it, and am furiously jealous when anyone else is there. When I'm up there and there's silence all around, when everybody in the visitors' balconies is so attentive, especially all those pretty women, I feel as strong as a lion, I'd speak my mind to God the Father Himself. It's only in the evening, after dinner, that I'm seized with fright. I've thought of renting a room in the Palais Royal. As for a carriage, I've thought of that too, but they would bribe the coachman to overturn it. I could very well have a coachman come up from Nancy, only before he left, M. Rey or M. de Vassigny would promise him twenty-five louis to get rid of me. . . ."

A drunken man was coming toward them. The doctor clung desperately to Lucien's arm.

"Ah, my friend," he said after a moment, "how lucky you are to be brave!"

#### GENERAL FARI

ONE DAY, in great distress, Lucien burst into the Minister's office. He had just seen a monthly police report, a copy of which had been sent by the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of War, stating that General Fari had been guilty of propaganda at Sarcey where he had been sent nine or ten days before the elections of — to nip in the bud an incipient liberal movement.

"Nothing could be farther from the truth!" cried Lucien indig-

nantly. "The General is devoted heart and soul to his duty. He would be horrified at the mere idea that anyone sent on a mission for a certain purpose should do the contrary."

"Were you present, sir, on the occasion mentioned in this report, the accuracy of which you challenge?" the Minister haughtily rejoined.

"No, Your Excellency, but I am sure that the report was made in bad faith."

The Minister was about to set out for the Château. He left the room in a passion, and began abusing the footman who was helping him on with his coat.

"If he got a penny out of this slander, I could understand," Lucien said to himself. "But what's the good of such mischievous lying? Poor Fari is almost sixty-five. If there happens to be a department head at the War Ministry who has a grudge against the General, he can take advantage of this report to have one of the best officers in the army retired—and one of the finest men in the world. . . ."

There happened to be in Paris at the moment the former secretary-general of the Comte de Vaize in the last Prefecture the Comte had occupied before Louis XVIII called him to the Chamber of Peers. Running across him the next day at the Ministry of War, Lucien spoke to him about the report on General Fari.

"What has our Minister against him?"

"His Excellency once had the notion that General Fari was paying undue attentions to his wife."

"What! At the General's age!"

"The young Comtesse was dying of boredom at — and General Fari amused her. But I'd be willing to wager not a word of gallantry ever passed between them."

"And you think for such a trifling reason . . ."

"Ah, you don't know our Minister. His pride takes offense at the slightest provocation, and he never forgets. That man's heart—if he has a heart—is a storeroom of hatreds. If he had the power of a Carrier or a Le Bon, he would have at least five hundred persons guillotined for purely personal offenses, and at least three-quarters of them would have even forgotten his name—if he didn't happen

to be a Minister. If ever he has supreme power, I advise you, who see him every day and probably oppose him on occasion, to betake yourself to the other side of the Rhine as fast as ever you can go."

Lucien hurried back to the Ministry to find Crapart, chief of the Ministry's secret police.

"What reason can I give that will affect this rogue?" Lucien pondered as he made his way across the courtyard and down the corridors that led to the police headquarters. "The truth—the General's innocence, his probity, my friendship for him—would all be equally ridiculous in his eyes. He would think me childish. . . ."

The attendant, who had great respect for the Hon. Private Secretary, whispered to him that Crapart was engaged at the moment with two or three spies of the highest society.

Still trying to think what he should say, Lucien gazed out of the window. Nothing came to him. He saw the men get into their carriage.

"Charming spies, indeed," Lucien said to himself. "No one could be more distinguished-looking."

The attendant returned and Lucien, still thoughtful, followed him. When he entered M. Crapart's office he seemed pleased.

"There is a certain Field Marshal Fari somewhere in the world," Lucien began.

Crapart's manner became grave and somewhat hostile.

"He's a poor devil," Lucien went on, "but not without a certain honesty. He pays my father regularly two thousand francs yearly on a debt. In an imprudent moment, my father loaned him a thousand louis, and the General still owes him about nine or ten thousand francs. So it is to our interest that General Fari should continue to be employed for four or five years longer."

Crapart remained thoughtful.

"I'll not beat about the bush, my dear colleague. . . . But you can see for yourself—I'll show you the Minister's own handwriting."

For five or six minutes, Crapart searched through his files.

"F . . . ! Someone's always mislaying my papers!"

An ugly-looking clerk entered and was roundly abused.

While being berated, he in turn examined the files, and finally handed Crapart the document he had been looking for:

"Here is report No. 5 of—" he began.

"Get out!" shouted Crapart with shocking rudeness, and, turning to Lucien, remarked calmly, "Here's what we're after."

He began turning over the pages:

"Hm . . . hm . . . hm . . . Ah! here it is," and he accented the words as he read:

"*'General Fari acted with firmness and moderation; he talked to the young men in the most persuasive manner. His reputation as an honest man carried weight.'* And now," Crapart exclaimed, "what do you think of this? All that is crossed out, and this is what has been added in His Excellency's own hand: *'Everything would have gone smoothly but for this deplorable fact: all the time General Fari was in — he engaged in propaganda, and never stopped talking about the Three Days.'* Under the circumstances, my dear colleague, I'm afraid I can do nothing to help you get back your ten thousand francs. That last sentence went over to the Ministry of War this morning. Look out for the explosion!" And Crapart gave one of his coarse laughs.

Lucien thanked him cordially and hurried over to the Ministry of War. He went directly to the department of the military police.

"I am sent by the Minister of the Interior on a most urgent matter," he explained. "By some mistake a deleted page of a rough draft was inserted in the Minister's last letter."

"Here's your letter. I haven't opened it yet," replied the department manager, handing Lucien the letter. "Take it along with you if you like, but let me have it back before I begin work tomorrow morning at ten o'clock."

"If the page is in the middle, I'd prefer correcting the letter at once."

"Here are erasers and pumice . . . make yourself at home."

As Lucien installed himself at a table, the official asked:

"And how is your great study on the Prefectures after the elections coming along? For the past two years they've been promis-

ing my wife's cousin, now Sub-Prefect at —, either Le Havre or Toulon . . .”

Lucien showed the greatest interest in the manager's family affairs, and gave him the most gratifying replies. While chatting, Lucien recopied the middle sheet of the letter signed Comte de Vaize. The sentence in question was next to the last one on the back of the page to the right. By cleverly spacing the words and the lines, Lucien succeeded in suppressing the seven lines concerning General Fari without the change being noticeable.

“I'll just take our page along with me,” he said, after working for three-quarters of an hour.

“As you wish, sir . . . and may I take this opportunity to recommend our little Sub-Prefect to your attention?”

“I'll look up his dossier and add my recommendation,” Lucien promised him. (“Here I am doing for General Fari what Brutus would not have done for his country.”)

One of the clerks of the firm of Van Peters, Leuwen, and Co. was leaving for England the following week. Lucien entrusted him with a letter for General Fari to be mailed when he got within twenty leagues of the General's place of residence. The letter informed the General of the hate the Minister still harbored against him. Without signing the letter, Lucien cited two or three remarks of their private conversations that would reveal to the worthy General the author of this salutary warning.

#### M. DES RAMIERS

EVER SINCE the beginning of the session, Lucien had found his duties more amusing. The most ethical, the most Fénelonian editor of the government newspaper par excellence, M. des Ramiers, recently elected Deputy from Escorbiac in the Midi by a majority of two votes, was engaged in paying assiduous court both to the Minister and to Madame la Comtesse de Vaize.

“He is an unpolitically-minded man,” Lucien decided, “who believes that he can reconcile things which are utterly incompatible. If men were as good as he pretends, there'd be no more need of a



police force or courts of law. But, after all, he errs only out of the goodness of his heart."

In consequence, M. des Ramiers was very well received when he came to see Lucien one morning on a matter of business.

After a preamble in the very best style, which, if reproduced here, would cover at least eight pages, M. des Ramiers explained that there were some exceedingly painful duties connected with public office. For example, he found himself under the strictest moral obligation to demand the removal of an exciseman of spirituous liquors, one M. Tourte, whose brother had twice, in the most scandalous fashion, opposed his, M. des Ramier's, nomination. But even this was said with ingenious precautions; otherwise Lucien might not have been able to control the irresistible desire to laugh which had seized him at the first hint of the Deputy's motives.

"Fénelon demanding a removal!"

Lucien amused himself by replying in des Ramier's own style. He pretended not to understand the question, not to realize what the Deputy was aiming at, and wickedly forced this modern Fénelon to ask point-blank for the removal of a poor devil of a semi-skilled worker who, on a salary of eleven hundred francs, supported himself, his wife, his mother-in-law, and five children.

When he had sufficiently enjoyed M. des Ramier's embarrassment, caused by Lucien's seeming obtuseness, which had forced the poor Deputy to speak in the plainest and therefore the most odious terms, Lucien advised him to take the matter up with the Minister, and tried to make him understand that the interview was at an end. As M. des Ramiers persisted, Lucien, sick of the rascal's mawkish expression, felt tempted to try harsher methods.

"But wouldn't you, my dear sir," insisted the Deputy, "do me the inestimable service of explaining to His Excellency the painful necessity I am faced with? My mandators seriously reproach me with being unfaithful to the promises I made them. But, on the other hand, to ask His Excellency for the removal of the head of a family . . . ! After all, I have my duty to my own family to consider. If the government should show its confidence in me by appointing me to the Auditor's court, for example, there would have

to be a new election. And how could I present myself to my astonished mandators unless the behavior of M. Tourte is censured by a conspicuous mark of disapprobation? As I see it, having had a majority of only two votes, the slightest preponderance on the other side might be fatal to the future deputation. But I interfere as little in the elections as possible, sir. I must admit that in the interests of our social mechanism I fully realize the necessity of certain actions—quite indispensable I agree—but which I wouldn't for the world be mixed up in. The decrees of the courts must be executed, it is true, but God forbid that such duties should fall to my lot!"

M. des Ramiers flushed very red, and at last realized that he was expected to retire.

"M. Tourte will be removed," thought Lucien, "but I shall henceforth call this new Fénelon by his right name: executioner."

Barely four days later, Lucien came upon a long letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of Finance enjoining the Collector of Indirect Taxes to recommend the removal of M. Tourte. Lucien called in a clerk famous for his skill in erasing words neatly, and had him write in Tarte for Tourte, wherever the name appeared.

It took des Ramiers two weeks to discover why the removal of M. Tourte was being delayed. Meantime, Lucien had found occasion to give Madame de Vaize a full account of the scene enacted in his office by this new Tartuffe. The Comtesse was much too kind ever to recognize evil unless it was very plainly explained and proved. Now, seven or eight times she reverted to the subject of poor M. Tourte, whose name had struck her, and several times she forgot to invite M. des Ramiers to the ministerial dinners given to Deputies of minor importance.

M. des Ramiers realized whence came this sudden turn of fortune. He began to insinuate himself into a very exclusive social set where he was considered a philosopher and a somewhat too liberal innovator, and was able to spread some malicious gossip.

Lucien had completely forgotten the scoundrel when one day young Desbacs, who envied des Ramier's wealth and was paying

court to him, came to inform Lucien of the Deputy's remarks. This was going a bit far, even for a Desbacs, Lucien thought.

"One rogue denouncing another!"

He went to see M. Crapart to ask him to verify the truth of Desbacs' slander. Rather a novice in Parisian salons, Crapart never doubted for a moment that Lucien was on the most intimate terms with Madame de Vaize, or at least on the point of attaining to that post which was the envy of all the young clerks: lover of the Minister's wife. M. Crapart displayed the greatest zeal in doing Lucien's bidding, and a week later was able to bring Lucien the confirmation of M. des Ramier's remarks about Madame de Vaize.

"I'll be right back," said Lucien, and, taking the misspelled reports of the society spies, he went off to see Madame de Vaize.

The open-hearted confidence the Comtesse felt toward Lucien was closely akin to a much tenderer sentiment. Although vaguely aware of this, Lucien was so sick of his affair with Madame Grandet that he felt a horror of all intrigues of this kind. Since he had left Nancy, the one thing which came the nearest to a state of happiness for him was to ride for an hour at a slow walk through the Meudon woods.

During the days that followed, Lucien found Madame de Vaize really incensed against M. des Ramiers, and as she possessed more sensibility than social tact, she made the Deputy feel her anger in the most humiliating fashion. I don't know how, but this usually gentle nature thought up the cruelest expressions to apply to this modern Fénelon. And as she employed them without the least circumspection in the midst of the numerous court that always surrounds a Minister's wife, they proved extremely damaging to this Deputy-journalist's aureole of philanthropy and virtue. His friends were worried, and there was an unmistakable allusion in the *Charivari*, a periodical which very neatly poked fun at the Tartuffery of the gentlemen of the *Juste-milieu*.

Finally came a letter from the Minister of Finance enclosing the reply of the Collector of Indirect Taxes: there was no M. Tarte among the excisemen in his Department. But M. des Ramiers, much to his credit, had managed to get a postscript added in the

Minister's own hand: "Could this perhaps be M. Tourte, excise-man at Escorbiac?"

A week later M. de Vaize replied:

"Yes, it is precisely M. Tourte who behaved so badly, and whose removal I recommend."

Lucien stole the letter and hurried to show it to Madame de Vaize.

"What can we do now?" she asked, with an air of concern which Lucien found charming. He took her hand and kissed it rapturously.

"You mustn't," breathed the Comtesse in a scarcely audible voice.

"I shall be careless and put this letter in an envelope addressed to the Ministry of War."

Eleven days later it was returned by the Minister of War with a note explaining the mistake. That day the correspondence clerk had placed three letters just received from the Minister of War in a large folder (called a chemise in the Ministries) and had written across it: "Three letters from His Excellency, the Minister of War." For a week Lucien had been holding in reserve another letter from the Minister of War, in which the Minister claimed authority over the mounted municipal guard. Lucien substituted it for the one in which the communication concerning M. Tourte had been returned. M. des Ramiers, who had no direct connection with the Minister of War, was obliged to have recourse to the famous General Barbaut, but in the end it took fully six months before his demand for the removal of M. Tourte was finally granted. As soon as the news reached Madame de Vaize, she gave Lucien five hundred francs to be sent to the poor official out of a job.

Lucien encountered twenty or more affairs of this kind. But, as you see, it takes eight printed pages to make all the details of such low intrigues understandable, and that is too costly!

Actuated by a sentiment new to her, the gentle Comtesse declared to her husband with a firmness which greatly astonished him, that if ever M. des Ramiers dined at the Ministry, she would be indisposed and dine in her own room. After two or three experiments, M. de Vaize ended by crossing M. de Ramiers' name off his list of Deputies. When this became known, over half the Deputies of the Center stopped shaking hands with the mealy-mouthed editor of

the ministerial paper. As a last straw, M. Leuwen, who had only learned of the anecdote later through the indiscretion of Desbacs, went to his son for a full account. The name of M. Tourte seemed to furnish a unique opportunity, and soon the story made the rounds of the salons of high diplomacy. M. des Ramiers, who succeeded in worming himself in everywhere, had somehow obtained an introduction to the Russian ambassador. When des Ramiers was presented to him, the famous Prince loudly exclaimed: "Ah! the *des Ramiers de Tourte!*" Whereupon the modern Fénelon turned purple, and the next day M. Leuwen set the anecdote circulating through Paris.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE of his Ministers, the King summoned M. Leuwen. The old banker flushed with pleasure when M. de N—, the King's orderly officer, handed him the royal communication. (After all, he had been twenty years of age in 1793, when the monarchy fell.) However, for a man grown old in the drawing rooms of Paris, it took but an instant to recollect himself and control his sudden emotion. The coldness of his manner toward the King's officer might have passed either for profound respect or for total indifference.

In fact, returning to his cabriolet, the officer asked himself: "Is it possible that this man, in spite of all his wit, is a Jacobin or just a fool impressed by a handshake?"

As he watched the cabriolet drive away, M. Leuwen regained his composure.

"I am about to play the well-known role of Samuel Bernard, whom Louis XIV once took walking with him in the gardens of Versailles."

This idea was enough to restore all M. Leuwen's youthful fire. He did not try to disguise from himself his moment of weakness, caused by His Majesty's message, nor was he afraid to admit all the ridicule with which he himself would have covered such a show of emotion had it been the subject of comment in the foyer of the Opera.

Until then, between M. Leuwen and the King there had been nothing more than a formal exchange of a few polite remarks

at a ball or at dinner. He had dined several times at the Château in the early days following the July revolt. It was called by another name then, and M. Leuwen, who was not easily deceived, was one of the first to discern the anger which so pernicious an example inspired in the King. At the time, M. Leuwen seemed to read in that royal glance:

"I shall frighten the men of property; I shall make them believe that it is a war of the people who have nothing, against those who have something."

Aimed at this idea, which was never mentioned, M. Leuwen, to avoid appearing as stupid as the few country Deputies sometimes invited with him, allowed himself certain surreptitious pleasantries.

At one time, M. Leuwen had suspected an intention of compromising the little tradesmen of Paris by inciting them to shed blood. He had found the idea in very bad taste and, without hesitating an instant, had resigned as Battalion Chief of the National Guard. That position he had owed to the little shopkeepers themselves, to whom he had pretty generously loaned thousand franc notes, which had even been returned. In addition, he stopped going to the Ministers' dinners, on the pretext of finding them boring.

In spite of that, the Comte de Beausobre, in speaking to him, had used the phrase: "*A man like you . . .*" and had continued to ply him with invitations. But M. Leuwen had resisted all his wily flattery.

In 1792, he had taken part in one or two campaigns, and the name of the French Republic was for him like the name of a once loved mistress who had been guilty of misconduct. In short, his hour had not yet struck.

And now this summons from the King upset all his ideas. Not feeling entirely sure of his self-command he determined to keep a close watch upon himself.

At the Château, M. Leuwen's manner was admirably cor-

rect, and as free from embarrassment as it was from any undue eagerness. The cautious and subtle mind of the great personage soon caught this nuance, and was not at all pleased. He tried, by adopting a friendly tone, even marking a personal interest, to awaken this bourgeois banker's vanity, but to no avail.

Far be it from us to wish to detract from this celebrated man's reputation for wily finesse! What could one expect from a King without the prestige of military victories, and confronted by a malicious and witty press? Besides, as we have pointed out, this celebrated personage was conversing seriously with M. Leuwen for the first time.

Like his Minister, this sly pettifogger who occupied the throne, began by saying: "A man like you . . ." But finding his crafty plebeian guest impervious to fair words, and seeing that he was losing his time for nothing, besides being reluctant, by the length of the interview, to give M. Leuwen an exaggerated idea of the importance of the favor he was about to ask of him, the King, in less than half an hour, was reduced to plain-speaking.

Noticing this change of tone in so adroit a man, M. Leuwen was pleased with himself, and this initial success did much to restore his self-confidence.

"So," he thought, "His Majesty has decided to forego his Bourbon subtleties!"

With a truly paternal air, and as though to show that whatever urgency appeared, he was led and, as it were, constrained by circumstances, the King said:

"I wished to see you, my dear sir, without the knowledge of my Ministers. I am afraid, with the exception of the Marshal (Minister of War), they have given you and Lieutenant Leuwen little reason to be pleased with them. Tomorrow, in all likelihood, the final vote will be taken on the — Bill. And I admit, sir, that I take a particular and peculiarly per-



sonal interest in this bill. I am very sure that it will pass by a standing vote. Is that not your opinion?"

"Yes, Sire."

"But by ballot, I shall be very properly defeated by eight or ten black balls. Do you agree with me?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Well then, do me a favor: speak against it if you like—your position I suppose makes that necessary—but give me your thirty-five votes. This is a personal favor I wished to ask of you myself."

"Sire, I have only twenty-seven votes at this moment, counting my own."

"Those poor noodles" (the King was speaking of his Ministers) "were terrified, or rather piqued, because of your list of eight little minor posts. I hardly need tell you that I approve your list in advance and, since the occasion has arisen, I invite you to add something for yourself, sir, and for Lieutenant Leuwen. . . ."

Happily for M. Leuwen, the King talked on in this vein for three or four minutes; during that time, M. Leuwen almost completely recovered his sang-froid.

"Sire," he replied, "I beg Your Majesty not to sign anything either for me or for my friends, but to allow me to present you with my twenty-seven votes tomorrow as a free gift."

"Gad, sir! You are a gallant gentleman!" cried the King, simulating, and not too badly, the frankness of a Henri IV; one had to remember the name he bore not to be deceived by it.

His Majesty talked for a good quarter of an hour along the same lines.

"Sire," said M. Leuwen, "it is impossible for M. de Beausobre ever to forgive my son. Your Minister betrayed rather a lack of self-control in the presence of that hotheaded young man, whom Your Majesty is pleased to call Lieutenant

Leuwen. I must ask Your Majesty never to believe a word of the reports on my son which M. de Beausobre will have brought to you by his police, or even by the police of my friend M. de Vaize."

"Whom you *serve with such probity*." And the King's eyes shone with finesse.

.....

M. Leuwen was silent. The King repeated his question,\* astonished at not receiving a reply.

"Sire, in replying, I should be afraid of yielding to my habit of candor."

"Answer, sir! Say exactly what you think, whatever it is."

M. Leuwen's interlocutor had spoken these words as a King.

"Sire, no one is unaware of the King's direct correspondence with the Northern courts, but no one mentions it to him."

Such prompt and unmitigated obedience seemed rather to surprise the great personage. He saw that M. Leuwen had no favor to ask. Not accustomed to giving or receiving anything for nothing, he had estimated that the twenty-seven votes would cost him twenty-seven thousand francs. "And it would be a bargain at that," this crowned calculating machine had decided.

He recognized in M. Leuwen all those ironic traits so often mentioned in the reports of General Rumigny.

"Sire," added M. Leuwen, "I have made a position for myself in the world by refusing nothing to my friends and by refusing myself nothing against my enemies. It is a very old habit. I beg Your Majesty not to ask me to change for the sake of your Ministers. They have assumed an air of arrogance toward me, even the worthy M. Bardoux, your Minister of Finance, who, when he spoke to me in the Chamber the other

\*The question to which allusion is made is not in the manuscript—an oversight on Stendhal's part undoubtedly.

day of my eight posts, said in all seriousness: 'My dear friend, one must not be insatiable.' I promise Your Majesty my votes, which will be twenty-seven at the most, but I beg that you allow me to continue to make fun of your Ministers."

And that is what he did the next day with extraordinary verve and gaiety. After all, his so-called eloquence was really nothing more than an offshoot of his temperament. M. Leuwen was far more natural than it was permissible for any man to be in Paris. And now he was stimulated by the idea of having forced the King to be almost sincere with him.

The bill in which the King seemed to take such an interest passed by a majority of only thirteen votes, six of them being his Ministers'. When the result was announced, M. Leuwen, sitting on the second bench from the left, three steps from the Ministers' bench, exclaimed aloud:

"This Ministry is about to leave us. Bon voyage!"

The remark was instantly repeated by all the Deputies on neighboring benches. Alone in the room with a lackey, M. Leuwen would have been pleased with the approbation of that lackey; it may therefore be readily imagined how delighted he was with the success of this simple remark in the Chamber.

"My reputation stands me in good stead!" he thought, sustaining the scrutiny of all those bright eyes fixed upon him.

It was clear to anyone that M. Leuwen was not passionately attached to any one opinion. There were two things, however, to which he would never lend himself: bloodshed and bankruptcy.

Three days after this bill was passed, M. Bardoux, the Minister of Finance, approached M. Leuwen in the Chamber and said with some trepidation (he was afraid of an epigram and spoke very low):

"The eight posts have been granted."

"Splendid, my dear Bardoux," Leuwen replied, "but you owe it to yourself not to countersign these favors. Leave it to

your successor in the Ministry of Finance. 'I shall wait, *Monseigneur.*' "

M. Leuwen spoke very distinctly so that all the Deputies around him heard his rejoinder, and were amazed. The idea of laughing at a Minister of Finance, a man who can make you a Receiver General!

He had some difficulty in winning the approval of the eight Deputies whose families would have benefited by the eight posts.

"In six months you will have two posts instead of one. We must learn to make sacrifices."

"Stuff and nonsense!" retorted one of the Deputies, somewhat bolder than the others.

M. Leuwen's eyes kindled; there were two or three rejoinders on the tip of his tongue. But he continued to smile pleasantly. "Only an idiot," he thought to himself, "would chop off the branch he's sitting on."

Every eye was turned on him. Another Deputy, emboldened by the first, cried:

"Our friend M. Leuwen sacrifices all of us for a *bon mot.*"

"If you wish to sever our relations, gentlemen, you are your own masters," M. Leuwen returned gravely. "In that case, I shall be obliged to enlarge my dining room in order to receive all the new friends who, every day, keep asking to vote with me."

"Come, come! Let's not quarrel!" cried a Deputy who was blessed with a good deal of common sense. "What would we be without M. Leuwen? I, for one, have chosen him as general-in-chief for my entire legislative career. I shall never be unfaithful to him."

"Nor I!"

"Nor I!"

As the two rebellious Deputies hesitated, M. Leuwen went over to them and held out his hand. He took the trouble to

make them understand that by accepting the eight posts the group would be reduced to the state of M. de Villèle's Three Hundred.

"Paris is a dangerous country. Within a week all the little newspapers would pounce upon your names."

At these words, the two opposition members shuddered.

"The least stupid of them," said the inexorable Leuwen to himself, "might very well have furnished articles."

And peace was restored.

The King had M. Leuwen invited frequently to the Château for dinner, and afterwards would retire with him to one of the window recesses, and engage him in conversation for a half or even three-quarters of an hour.

"My reputation for wit is dead and buried if I spare the Ministers." So, on the days following his dinners at the Château, he made a point of making fun of those gentlemen with almost complete unrestraint. The King complained to him.

"Sire," he replied, "I implored Your Majesty to give me carte blanche where your Ministers were concerned. I might grant a truce to their successors. This Ministry lacks wit, and, in peace time, that is what Paris will never pardon. What our worthy citizens demand is either prestige, like Bonaparte returning from Egypt, or else wit." (At the mention of that redoubtable name, the King was like a nervous young woman at the mention of the executioner.)

A few days after this conversation with the King, an affair was brought to the attention of the Chamber which caused all eyes to turn toward M. Leuwen. A Madame Destrois, ex-post-mistress at Torville, complained that after being unjustly accused and convicted of a breach of trust, she had been removed. In making this petition, she explained, she wished simply to defend herself and vindicate her character. As for justice, *that* she did not expect as long as M. Bardoux enjoyed the King's confidence. The petition was trenchant, bordering on insolence,

but not insolent; it might have been drawn up by the late M. de Martignac.

M. Leuwen spoke three times, and the second time was literally overwhelmed by applause. That day, the order of the day, asked for by M. de Vaize almost on bended knee, was obtained by a majority of only two, and by a standing vote at that. The ministerial majority was not more than fifteen or twenty votes. M. Leuwen said to the group of Deputies clustered around him as usual:

"M. de Vaize has changed the habit of timid voters. They usually stand up for justice, and vote for the Ministry. As for me, I hereby open a subscription for the benefit of the widow Destrois, the ex-postmistress who will certainly remain *ex*, and put myself down for three thousand francs."

Inexorable as he was with the Ministers, M. Leuwen took good care always to be the humble servitor of his *Southern Legion*. Only the twenty-eight Deputies were invited to dinner at his house. Had he so desired, his personal following (for his opinions were extremely accommodating) might have been increased to fifty or sixty.

"To split up my nice little party, the Ministers would gladly give those hundred thousand francs they sent to my son too late."

It was almost always on Monday that he invited his troop to dinner, in order to draw up a parliamentary plan of campaign for the week.

"Gentlemen, which one of you would like to dine at the Château?"

At these words the worthy Deputies saw M. Leuwen already Minister. They agreed that M. Chapeau, one of their number, should be given that honor, and that later, before the end of the session, the same honor should be solicited for M. Cambray.

"I shall add to these the names of MM. Lamorte and Debrée, the two gentlemen who thought of leaving us."

Whereupon the gentlemen in question began to hem and haw and make excuses.

M. Leuwen went to see His Majesty's aide-de-camp to arrange for these invitations, and less than three weeks later, four of the most obscure Deputies in the Chamber were invited to dine with the King. M. Cambray was so overcome by this undreamed-of honor that he fell ill and was unable to profit by it.

The day following this great event, M. Leuwen decided that he should take advantage of the weakness of these worthy gentlemen, whose lack of wit alone kept them from being mischievous.

"Gentlemen," he asked them, "if His Majesty should accord me a Cross, which one of you, do you think, should be the happy *Chevalier*?"

The gentlemen asked for a week to discuss the matter, but, at the end of that time, had been unable to reach a decision. After dinner it was decided to put it to a vote, a custom which M. Leuwen had found it expedient to allow to fall into abeyance. There were twenty-seven present. M. Cambray, ill and absent, received thirteen votes, M. Lamorte fourteen, M. Leuwen's own vote among the latter. . . . M. Lamorte was chosen.

There was apparently not the remotest chance of M. Leuwen's obtaining a Cross. "But the idea," he thought, "will keep them from revolting."

M. Leuwen went pretty regularly to see Marshal Soult, the Minister of War, since that Minister had made Lucien a Lieutenant. The Marshal showed him the greatest good will, and the two men were soon seeing each other three times a week. It was not long before the Marshal made his friend understand, but in such a way as not to call for a reply, that if the present Ministry should fall, and if the Marshal were charged with forming another, M. Leuwen would not be left out. M.

Leuwen was duly grateful, but he carefully avoided giving any similar assurance.

Sometime previously, M. Leuwen had screwed up his courage sufficiently to confess his dawning ambition to his wife.

"I am beginning to think very seriously about these things. Success has sought me out. The idea of myself as *eloquent* (according to friendly journalists) strikes me as comical. I talk in the Chamber exactly as I talk in a drawing room. But if the Ministry, which is on its last legs, should fall, I'd find myself with nothing more to say. For, to tell the truth, I hold no particular opinions on anything, and certainly, at my age, I am not going to begin to study in order to form some."

"But," put in Lucien, "you are so thoroughly versed in financial questions; you understand the Budget with all its dodges. There aren't fifty other Deputies who realize just how the Budget lies, and those fifty, you may be sure, are the first to be bought. Day before yesterday you had the Minister of Finance shaking in his boots on the question of the tobacco monopoly. You made the most prodigious use of the letter of Prefect Noireau, who had refused to allow a man to raise tobacco because he held the wrong opinions."

"All that is only sarcasm," M. Leuwen replied. "A little is effective, but too much, in the end, offends the stupid minority of the Chamber which, at bottom, doesn't understand anything about anything, and is almost the majority. My eloquence and my reputation are like a soufflé; a common working man would find them pretty unsubstantial fare."

"But you possess such a marvelous understanding of men in general," his son insisted. "Above all you know everything that has happened in Paris since Napoleon was Consul in 1800. That is enormous."

"The *Gazette*," remarked Madame Leuwen, "calls you the Maurepas of this age. I only wish I had as much influence with



you as Madame Maurepas with her husband. Enjoy yourself, my dear, but, for mercy's sake, don't make yourself a Minister, it would kill you. You talk much too much as it is. Why, it gives me a pain in your chest!"

"There is still another objection to my being Minister," continued M. Leuwen. "I should ruin myself. The loss of Van Peters is beginning to be keenly felt at the bank. We have recently been caught in two bankruptcies in Amsterdam, for the simple reason that, since his death, no one has gone to Holland. It is the fault of this confounded Chamber. And this confounded son of yours is the primary cause of all my troubles. First of all, he stole half of your heart from me; secondly, he should have appreciated the value of money and taken his place at the head of my banking house. A man born rich, who does not dream of doubling his fortune! Has such a phenomenon ever been seen before? He deserves to be poor. His adventures over the election of M. Mairobot at Caen frankly nettled me. Had it not been for the stupid way M. de Vaize received him on his return, I should never have dreamed of making a name for myself in the Chamber. Now I've acquired a taste for this fashionable sport. And my role in the fall of the Ministry, that is, if it does fall, will be far different from what it was in its formation. But I am faced with a frightful obstacle: *what am I to ask for?* If I don't take something substantial, at the end of two months the very Ministry I helped to put in will laugh at me, and I shall be in a *ridiculous position*. To be Receiver General means nothing to me from the point of view of money, and it is a position too inferior to the one I already enjoy in the Chamber. To make Lucien a Prefect is simply to play into the hands of the friend who will be Minister of the Interior, giving him a chance to discredit me by removing Lucien from office. And that is exactly what would happen within three months."

"But what a splendid role—to do what is right without expecting a thing in return!" exclaimed Madame Leuwen.

"Something our public would never believe! That was M. de Lafayette's role for forty years, and he was always on the verge of being ridiculous. As a people we are too gangrened to understand such things. For three-quarters of the inhabitants of Paris, M. de Lafayette would have been a man really worthy of admiration had he stolen four million francs. Even if I refused the Ministry, but ran my house on a grand scale amounting to a hundred thousand écus a year, while at the same time buying land to show that I was not ruining myself, I should be more of a genius for them than ever, and I'd be able to keep the upper hand of these semi-rascals who are about to battle for the Ministry."

And turning toward his son M. Leuwen added laughingly: "If you don't solve the problem: 'What shall I ask for?' I shall consider you totally devoid of imagination, and follow the only course left to me: I shall enjoy poor health and go to Italy for three months. The Ministry can then be formed without me. On my return I shall have been completely forgotten, but I shall not be ridiculous. Until I find some way of profiting by the combined favor of the King and the Chamber, which has made me one of the representatives of high finance, this favor must be taken into account and cultivated.

"And now," he said, addressing Madame Leuwen, "I must ask something rather boring of you, my dear. We shall have to give two balls. If the first is *well attended* we can dispense with the second, to which, I am sure, *all France*, as we used to say in my youth, would come."

The two balls took place and were an enormous success. Society accorded its unreserved approval. The Marshal had attended the first one to which the Chamber flocked, as it were, in a body, nor had the King failed to lend his presence. But what was even more significant, the Minister of War had

made a point of taking M. Leuwen aside for at least twenty minutes. And during this conference, which made the eyes of the eighty Deputies pop, curiously enough the Marshal had really talked business with M. Leuwen.

"I am very much embarrassed about one thing," the Minister had said. "What, within the realm of reason, can you ask for your son? Do you want him to be Prefect? Nothing simpler. Do you want him to be an Embassy Secretary? Unfortunately there is a tiresome hierarchy in the way. I could make him Second Secretary and, in three months, First."

*"In three months? . . ."* M. Leuwen had repeated with a dubious air, which was entirely candid, and without the slightest sarcastic intent.

In spite of this apparent sincerity, in anyone else the Marshal would have considered the remark offensive. To M. Leuwen he had replied in perfect good faith and with unfeigned perplexity:

"That's the difficulty. Show me a way of overcoming it."

M. Leuwen, finding nothing to reply to this, had fallen back on gratitude and friendship, the most genuine, most unaffected . . .

The two greatest dissemblers of Paris had been sincere. That is what Madame Leuwen had remarked when her husband told her of his confidential conversation with the Marshal.

The Ministers were forced to attend the second ball. Poor little Madame de Vaize was almost in tears as she said to Lucien:

"At the balls of the coming season it is you who will be Minister, and I who will have to come to you."

"I shall not be more devoted to you then than I am today, for that would be impossible. But I wish you would tell me which member of this house is going to be Minister. Not I, certainly, and my father even less—if that were possible."

"Then you are all the more wicked. You overthrow us with-

out having anyone to put in our place. And all because M. de Vaize did not flatter you sufficiently when you returned from Caen!"

"Your grief makes me miserable. If only I could console you by the gift of my heart! But it was yours long ago as you very well know." And this was said with sufficient gravity not to appear impertinent.

But poor little Madame de Vaize was far from having enough wit to know what to reply, much farther from knowing *how*. She was satisfied to feel it vaguely, somewhat like this:

*"If I were perfectly sure that you loved me, if I could have made up my mind to accept your homage, the joy of being yours would be the only possible consolation for the loss of the Ministry."*

"Here," thought Lucien, "is another of the miseries of this Ministry which my father is flirting with at this moment. It was no pleasure to this poor little woman when M. de Vaize attained to the Ministry. Embarrassment and fear seem to have been her only sensations, and now she is in despair at losing it. She has a soul which only waits for an excuse to be sad. If de Vaize is turned out of the Ministry she will decide to be sad for the next ten years. At the end of those ten years she will be on the threshold of middle age, and unless she finds a priest who will occupy himself exclusively with her, ostensibly as her spiritual adviser, she will be bored and miserable for the rest of her life. No amount of beauty and charm could possibly make up for a character as tiresome as hers. *Requiescat in pace*. I'd be in a pretty pickle if she took me at my word and gave me her heart. Oh, what a dull and dreary age! In the time of Louis XIV I'd have been gallant and amusing, or at least tried to be, with such a woman. In this Nineteenth Century I am insipidly sentimental. It is the only consolation in my power to offer her."

If we were writing a *Memoirs of Walpole*, or any other book of that kind equally beyond our talents, we should continue to give the anecdotic history of seven semi-rascals, two or three of them clever, and one or two with fluent tongues, succeeded by the same number of arrant knaves. A poor honest man in the Ministry of the Interior who had devoted himself in perfect good faith to useful things would have passed for a fool; the whole Chamber would have scoffed at him. It was incumbent upon a man to make his fortune—not of course by flagrantly stealing—but, in order to be respected, it was of prime necessity to feather one's nest. As these little customs are on the eve of being replaced by the disinterested virtues of the Republic and of men who will die like Robespierre with thirteen écus and ten pennies in their pockets, we wanted to make a note of them.

But the story we promised our reader is not even the tale of this man of pleasure and of the pursuits by which he hoped to escape boredom. It is merely the story of his son, a simple soul who, in spite of himself, became involved in the fall of Ministers, that is as far as his melancholy, or, at least, his serious character allowed.

Lucien was filled with remorse in regard to his father. He felt no affection for him, and for this he often reproached himself, looking upon it almost as a crime or, at least, as a sign of an unfeeling heart. Whenever the pressing affairs of State gave him a little leisure, Lucien would say to himself:

"What gratitude I owe my father! I am the motive for almost all his actions. True, he wants to manage my life in his own way, but instead of commanding, he persuades. How carefully I should watch myself!"

Although the truth filled him with shame, he was forced to admit that he did not love his father. This was a constant torment to him, and almost a greater grief than to have been *betrayed by Madame de Chasteller* (that is the way he thought

of it on his dark days). Lucien's true character had not yet asserted itself, which is surprising at the age of twenty-four. Under an exterior, which had something singular and thoroughly noble about it, was hidden a naturally gay and heedless nature. Such he had been during the two years following his expulsion from the École, but since his experience at Nancy, this gaiety had suffered total eclipse. He appreciated the vivacity and all the charms of Mademoiselle Raimonde, but never thought of her except when he wanted to forget the noblest side of himself.

During the ministerial crisis, to his ever-present cause of sadness was added the bitter remorse of feeling no affection for his father. The *gulf* between them was too profound. Everything which, rightly or wrongly, seemed to Lucien sublime, generous, lovable, everything for which it seemed to him noble to die, with which it seemed beautiful to live, was a subject of ridicule to his father and a delusion in his eyes. There was one subject only on which they were in accord: that intimate friendship of Lucien's parents which had stood the test of thirty years. M. Leuwen was, it is true, of an exquisite courtesy, which in the matter of his son's weakness fairly attained the sublime, and was an almost perfect replica of reality. But Lucien had enough discernment to see that it was the sublimity of the mind, of subtlety, of the art of being polite, discreet, impeccable.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

IT BECAME more and more obvious to everyone that M. Leuwen was going to represent the Bourse and the moneyed interests in the ministerial crisis which all eyes saw looming on the horizon and rapidly approaching. Disputes between the Minister of War and his colleagues were of daily, and even violent, occurrence. But as this detail may be found in all contemporary memoirs, and would take us too far afield, suffice it to say that more Deputies now crowded around M. Leuwen in the Chamber than around the Ministers.

Each day M. Leuwen's embarrassment grew. While everyone was envying him his existence and his position in the Chamber (with which he himself was not ill-pleased), he saw clearly that it could not last. While the better informed Deputies, the bigwigs of finance, and a small number of diplomats who understood the country in which they were envoys, admired the ease and casual air with which M. Leuwen had brought about so great a change, and steered the course of the Deputies at whose head he had placed himself, this clever man himself was in despair at not having any plan.

"I keep on delaying things," he said to his wife and son. "I send word to the Marshal that he must hound the Minister of Finance to the limit, that he might instigate an investigation into those emoluments of four or five million which that Minister awards himself. I prevent our friend de Vaize from doing foolish things. I have our fat Bardoux at the Ministry of Finance informed that we are not going to divulge more than a few of the lesser lies of the Budget, and so forth and so on . . . And in spite of all these delays, not a single idea has occurred

to me. Oh, where is that charitable soul who will spare me an idea!"

"You cannot eat your ice and yet you are afraid of its melting," laughed Madame Leuwen. "What a painful predicament for a gourmet!"

"And I am scared to death for fear I shall regret it as soon as it has melted."

Such conversations were resumed daily around the little table where Madame Leuwen took her evening lichen.

M. Leuwen now bent all his efforts to delay the fall of the Ministry. And the last three or four conversations he had with a great personage were conducted with this end in view. He could not be Minister himself, he could not decide on anyone else, and if the Ministry were formed without him he would lose his position in the Chamber.

For two months M. Leuwen had been extraordinarily bored with M. Grandet who, grown suddenly sentimental, had recalled that they used to work together at M. Perregaux's. M. Grandet courted him diligently, and could not seem to live without either the father or the son.

"Does this fatuous fool want to be Receiver General at Paris or at Rouen, or is he aiming at the peerage?"

"No," rejoined Madame Leuwen, "he wants to be Minister."

"Grandet Minister! Great God," cried her husband, bursting out laughing. "Why, his department heads would laugh in his face!"

"But he has all that ponderous and silly self-importance which is so popular with the Chamber of Deputies. Those gentlemen really abhor wit. What was it they disliked in MM. Guizot and Thiers but their wit? They accept wit only as a necessary evil. It is the result of their training under the Empire, and the insults which Napoleon on his return from Moscow heaped upon the ideology of M. de Tracy."

"I thought the Chamber could never sink lower than the



Comte de Vaize. That great man, like Villèle, has just the right degree of coarseness and cunning to be on a par and popular with the great majority of the Chamber. Will they really put up with this M. Grandet, so dull, so ordinary?"

"But in a Minister keenness and delicacy of wit would be deadly sins. It was hard enough for the Chamber, composed of the men of the old regime with which M. de Martignac had to deal, to forgive him his charming little light comedy humor, what would it have been had he also displayed that delicacy which is so shocking to wholesale grocers and people of wealth? If excess there must be, an excess of coarseness is less dangerous; it can always be remedied."

"Grandet understands only one virtue—that of facing a pistol or a revolutionary barricade. When a man, in any sort of an affair, refuses to capitulate for pecuniary profit or a post for a member of his family, Grandet immediately shouts: *hypocrisy!* He says he has seen only three dupes in France: MM. de Lafayette, Dupont de l'Eure, and Dupont de Nemours, who understood the language of birds. If he even had enough wit, or education, or vivacity to be able to cross swords in conversation, he might deceive people. But the least clairvoyant person recognizes in him at once the spice merchant who has made a fortune and wants to pass himself off for a Duke."

"M. de Vaize is a veritable Voltaire of wit and a Jean-Jacques of sentiment by comparison!"

"M. Grandet is like M. de Castries who in the days of Louis XVI was at a loss to understand how there could be so much talk about a d'Alembert and a Diderot, men who didn't keep carriages. Such ideas were fashionable in 1780; today they are even beneath a legitimist gazette of the provinces, and would compromise any man."

Since the success of his father's second speech in the Chamber Lucien began to notice that he himself had become quite

a personage in Madame Grandet's drawing room. He tried to take advantage of this piece of good fortune to press his amorous suit in the midst of all the refinements of the most costly luxury. But he seemed to feel nothing but the genius of the cabinetmaker and upholsterer. The delicacy of these artisans made him all the more acutely aware of the less delicate traits of Madame Grandet's character. He tried in vain to banish the vision that kept fatally rising before his eyes of a mercer's wife who has just won first prize in one of those Vienna lotteries which the bankers of Frankfort are at such pains to advertise.

Madame Grandet was by no means what is called a goose, and was well aware of her lack of success.

"You pretend to have such an overpowering feeling for me, yet you show not the slightest pleasure in being in my little circle which normally should precede friendship."

"My God, how fatally true!" thought Lucien to himself. "Is she going to become witty at my expense?"

He hastened to reply:

"I am naturally shy, inclined to melancholy, and this misfortune is aggravated by that of being deeply in love with a woman who is perfect, and who feels nothing for me."

Never had he made a greater mistake than to voice such a complaint; from that moment it was Madame Grandet, so to speak, who courted Lucien. He seemed to take advantage of this position but—what was really very cruel—almost invariably when there were a great many people present. If he found Madame Grandet alone with only her intimate circle, he had to make the most heroic effort not to despise them.

"Are they wrong because their way of viewing life is diametrically opposed to mine? They have the majority with them."

But in spite of all his reasoning, which was eminently just, little by little he would grow cold, silent, interested in nothing.

"How can one talk of true virtue, of fame, of beauty, in

front of fools who misunderstand everything and try to spoil anything that is fine with their degrading jests?"

Distressed at being bored in the society of a woman he was supposed to adore, Lucien would have been even more distressed had he realized that his own state of mind was perfectly apparent. As he presumed that all these people were sticklers for polite behavior, he redoubled his attention and courtesy toward them.

During all this time Lucien's position, as private secretary to the man his father was engaged in tormenting, had become exceedingly delicate. By a kind of tacit agreement, M. de Vaize and Lucien rarely spoke to each other except to exchange polite formalities; an office boy carried papers from one to the other. As though to mark his confidence in Lucien, M. de Vaize fairly overwhelmed him with important ministerial business.

"Does he think he will make me cry mercy?" thought Lucien, and worked at least as hard as three department heads. He was often at his desk at seven in the morning, and sometimes during dinner he would have documents copied at his father's bank, and return to the Ministry in the evening to have them placed on His Excellency's table. And the Minister received these proofs of what in the departments was called talent, with the greatest possible ill-humor.

"It's more deadening than to calculate a logarithm to fourteen decimal places," Lucien remarked to Coffe, while M. de Vaize was complaining bitterly to his wife:

"M. Leuwen and his son evidently want to show me that I made a mistake in not offering the latter a Prefecture on his return from Caen. But what have they to complain of? He has his lieutenancy and his Cross which I promised him *only* if he succeeded, and he did not succeed."

Stealing Lucien's valuable time from those endless documents, Madame de Vaize would send for him three or four times a week. Madame Grandet also found frequent excuses

for seeing him during the day, and, because of his feeling of gratitude to his father, Lucien tried to take advantage of these occasions and give a passable imitation of a man in love. He calculated that he saw Madame Grandet at least twelve times a week.

"If society is interesting itself in my affairs, it will think that I am terribly smitten, and I shall be forever whitewashed of the suspicion of Saint-Simonism."

To please Madame Grandet he took great care of his appearance and passed for one of the best dressed young men of Paris.

"It is a great mistake to make yourself look younger," objected his father. "If you were thirty-six, or at least had the disagreeable look of a *doctrinaire*, I could put you in the position which I should like to see you occupy."

This general state of affairs had now lasted six weeks, and Lucien was consoling himself with the thought that it could not possibly last six weeks longer, when one fine day Madame Grandet sent a little note to his father requesting an hour's conversation with him the following day at Madame de Thérèmines'.

"I am already treated like a Minister," thought M. Leuwen. "O enviable state!"

Next day Madame Grandet began with endless protestations of one sort or another. During these lengthy circumlocutions, M. Leuwen remained grave and impassive.

"Since I am asked for audiences, I must behave like a Minister," he said to himself.

After some time Madame Grandet went on to the eulogy of her own sincerity. . . . M. Leuwen counted the minutes by the clock on the mantelpiece.

"First and foremost, I must remain silent, I must not indulge in the slightest pleasantry at the expense of this young

woman—so fresh and so young, yet already so ambitious! But what the deuce is she after? She is really lacking in tact. She ought to see how bored I am. . . . She may enjoy more aristocratic manners than our young ladies of the Opera, but less real wit.”

But, when Madame Grandet at length asked him point-blank for a Ministry for her husband, M. Leuwen stopped being bored.

“The King, you know, is very fond of M. Grandet,” she added, “and will be delighted to see him take his place in the affairs of State. We have proofs of the good will of the Château, which I shall be glad to particularize if you will give me the opportunity.”

M. Leuwen assumed a cold and distant air. The scene was beginning to amuse him; it was worth a little play-acting. In spite of a natural tenacity of purpose which was not easily daunted, alarmed now and almost disconcerted, Madame Grandet began to speak of their longstanding friendship. . . .

At these remarks on friendship, which called for some response, M. Leuwen remained silent, and as though preoccupied. Madame Grandet saw her experiment miscarrying.

“I am ruining our chances,” she said to herself. This thought decided her on extreme measures, and sharpened her wits.

Her position was rapidly deteriorating: M. Leuwen was not the same man he had been at the beginning of their interview. At first she was uneasy, then terrified. These emotions were most becoming, and lent some expression to her face. M. Leuwen encouraged her apprehensions.

Things arrived at such a pass that Madame Grandet decided to ask M. Leuwen plainly what it was he had against her. At this, M. Leuwen, who had for the last three-quarters of an hour maintained an almost solemn and ominous silence, had to struggle to keep from bursting out laughing.

“If I laugh,” he thought, “what I am about to say will appear

to her in all its ignominy. I shall have endured an hour of boredom for nothing, and shall miss an opportunity of *sound-ing* the depths of this famous virtue."

At last M. Leuwen, whose silence had grown more and more intolerable, seemed mercifully on the point of deigning to explain himself.

He asked a thousand pardons for what he was about to say, and for the painful expression he would be forced to employ. He amused himself by keeping Madame Grandet in a state of terror by implying the most terrible things.

"After all, she has no character, and that poor Lucien will be getting a boring mistress—if he gets her. These celebrated beauties are admirable for decoration and for show, but that's all. They must be seen in a magnificent drawing room surrounded by a lot of diplomats, covered with all their gewgaws, their medals and their ribbons. I'd be curious to know if indeed Madame de Chasteller is any better. Certainly not as far as physical beauty is concerned, or superb carriage, and it would be impossible to match the real beauty of these lovely arms. Aside from that, although it's rather amusing to poke fun at her, she bores me to death. At least, I keep counting the minutes by the clock. If she had the character her beauty seems to promise, she would have interrupted me a dozen times and driven me into a corner. She lets herself be treated like a victim who is forced to fight a duel."

At last, after several minutes of indirect propositions which kept Madame Grandet on tenterhooks, M. Leuwen pronounced the following words in a low and deeply emotional tone:

"Madam, I confess that I cannot bring myself to like you, for, because of you, my son will certainly die of a consumption." And he thought with amusement: "My voice stood me in good stead, it had just the right note of pathos."

But, after all, M. Leuwen was not made to be a great dip-

lomat, a Talleyrand, an ambassador to serious personages. Boredom made him ill-humored, and he was never sure that he would be able to resist the temptation of launching some amusing or insolent sally by way of diversion. After speaking his solemn line, he felt such an irresistible desire to laugh that he quickly fled.

Left alone, Madame Grandet locked the door and for an hour remained motionless in her armchair. Her air was pensive, her eyes immeasurably wide open, like M. Guerin's *Phédre* in the Luxembourg. No ambition-ridden man, tormented by ten years of waiting, ever coveted the Ministry as Madame Grandet coveted it at that moment.

"How wonderful to play the role of a Madame Roland, in the midst of this decaying society! I should write all my husband's ministerial circulars for him, for he has no style.

"Only through a great and unhappy passion with, as my victim, the most distinguished man of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, could I ever hope to attain a really important position. To what heights that would lift me! But I can grow old in my present situation before any such chance occurs. Whereas, if M. Grandet became Minister, men like that—perhaps not of the bluest nobility but of a very satisfactory hue—would flock around me. Madame de Vaize is just a little fool, but she has all of them she wants. Sensible people are sure always to come back to the master of the Budget."

Reasons swarmed through Madame Grandet's head, confirming her feeling that it would be a joy to be a Minister's wife. It was not exactly the way to contemplate such an eventuality. Such were hardly the thoughts that fired the great soul of Madame Roland on the eve of her husband's becoming Minister. But, alas, it is in the same way that our age imitates the great men of '93, the way M. de Polignac showed his character; the material fact alone is copied: to be a Minister, to

bring about a coup d'état, create a "Day"—a 4th Prairial, a 10th of August, an 18th Fructidor. But how such triumphs are to be achieved, the motives behind the deeds—no one thinks of digging as deeply as that.

When it came to the question of the price to be paid for these blessings, Madame Grandet's imagination deserted her, she refused to think about it, her mind became blank. She was loath frankly to accept, and no less reluctant to refuse. She needed a long and superfluous debate to accustom herself to the idea. Fired by ambition, her soul could not be bothered by this disagreeable condition which was, after all, of secondary importance. She felt that she would certainly suffer remorse—not religious, but aristocratic remorse.

"Would a great lady, a Duchesse de Longueville, a Madame de Chevreuse, have given so little thought to this disagreeable condition?" she asked herself vaguely. But, her mind being completely absorbed by her dreams of the Ministry, she failed to answer.

"How many footmen will we have to keep? How many horses?"

This woman, so famous for her virtue, had so little time to spare in the service of that habit of the soul called chastity, that she forgot to reply to this question she kept asking herself, and, it must be admitted, purely as a matter of form. However, after enjoying her future ministerial status for more than three-quarters of an hour, she at last gave it her attention.

"Would Madame de Chevreuse or Madame de Longueville have consented? Yes, those great ladies undoubtedly would have consented. What makes them superior to me on the moral plane is that they yielded out of a sort of semi-passion, except when it was for a somewhat more physical reason. *They* could be seduced, *I* cannot." (And she admired herself enormously.) "With me judgment and foresight are the only con-



siderations. Certainly the idea of pleasure does not enter into it."

Having regained her serenity, or at least feeling fairly reassured on this feminine point, Madame Grandet once more gave herself up to the sweet contemplation of the exalted position she would enjoy as soon as she became a Minister's wife. . . .

"A name that has once been associated with the Ministry is famous forever after. Among all the eminent men in the nation, thousands of Frenchmen know only the names of those who have been Ministers."

Madame Grandet's imagination soared away into the future, her youth stretching out before her, crowded with the most flattering events.

"I shall always be just, always kind—and to everybody, but with dignity. I shall be very active, and inside ten years all Paris will be talking about me. Already my house, my salon, my assemblies are well-known to the public. My old age will be like that of Madame Récamier—only with greater wealth."

Then, for a fleeting instant and only for form's sake, did she stop to wonder:

"But has M. Leuwen really enough influence to give my husband a portfolio? Or, once I have paid the price agreed upon, will he simply laugh at me? I must of course make sure! The first condition of any contract is the ability to deliver the merchandise sold."

The step Madame Grandet had just taken had first been agreed upon with her husband. She refrained, however, from giving him a verbatim account of her interview with M. Leuwen. She knew quite well that it would not be at all impossible to bring him to see things in a reasonable, philosophical and political light, but such a subject is always painful for a woman who respects herself. "It is better," she decided, "just to skip that part."

That evening it was not with unmitigated pleasure that she saw Lucien enter her drawing room. She lowered her eyes in embarrassment as her conscience told her:

"This is the person who will make it possible for you to be the wife of the Minister of the Interior."

Lucien, who knew nothing of his father's intervention, was immediately struck by something less formal and more natural about Madame Grandet, and later even noticed a hint of greater intimacy and warmth in her manner toward him. This manner which suggested, if only remotely, real simplicity and naturalness, pleased him far more than what Madame Grandet called sparkling wit. He remained by her side almost the whole evening.

But Lucien's presence, there was no doubt about it, embarrassed Madame Grandet. She was better acquainted with the theories than the practice of that high political intrigue which, in the time of Cardinal de Retz, constituted the daily life of those noble ladies de Longueville and de Chevreuse. She dismissed him early, but not without a little air of possession and friendly understanding which added to the pleasure Lucien felt at regaining his liberty at eleven o'clock.

Madame Grandet scarcely closed her eyes all night. It was only as day broke at five or six o'clock in the morning that the happiness of being the wife of a Minister finally let her get some rest. Had she been in the Ministry of the Rue de Grenelle, her sensations of happiness could hardly have been more violent. She was a woman for whom tangible blessings alone count.

During that night she had known one or two little vexations. For example, she began calculating the number and price of liveries at the Ministry. M. Grandet's were made partly of canary yellow cloth, which, in spite of all her recommendations, could not be kept clean for more than a month. How

much this expense would be increased, how much more supervision required by the enormous number of liveries needed at the Ministry! She began to count: the porter, the coachman, the footmen . . . Here she was stopped short in her calculations: she was not sure of the number of footmen at the Ministry of the Interior.

"Tomorrow I shall pay a little diplomatic call on Madame de Vaize. Of course she must not suspect that I have come to take stock of her household. How vulgar if she were to use my visit as the subject for malicious gossip! But think of not knowing the make-up of a Minister's household! M. Grandet ought to know such things—but then he hasn't much of a head."

It was not until she woke the next morning at eleven o'clock, that Madame Grandet gave Lucien a thought. She soon smiled, discovering that she was really fond of him, that he pleased her more than he had the day before. For was it not through him that all those grandeurs would come which were to inaugurate a new life?

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

WHILE LUCIEN was experiencing some astonishment at the singular reception accorded him that evening at the Hôtel Grandet, Madame Leuwen was engaged in serious conversation with her husband.

"Ah, my dear," she said, "ambition has turned your head, such a good head too, God knows! Your lungs will suffer. And what can ambition do for you? Is it money you want? Is it decorations?"

Thus Madame Leuwen complained to her husband, who failed to defend himself.

Our reader will perhaps be surprised that a woman, still her husband's best friend at forty-five, should dare be so perfectly frank with him. It is because with a man of so singular a turn of mind, and a trifle mad, like M. Leuwen, it would have been exceedingly dangerous to be anything but entirely ingenuous. He might perhaps be deceived for a month or two through heedlessness, but one fine day the whole force of his really remarkable mind would, like the fire in a reverberatory furnace, become concentrated on the point about which a person was trying to deceive him; the deception would be discerned, made fun of, and all that person's credit with him lost forever.

Fortunately, for the happiness of husband and wife, they thought out loud in each other's presence. In the midst of such a lying world (and there is perhaps even more mendacity in intimate relationships than in society) this fragrance of perfect sincerity had a charm from which time could steal nothing of its freshness.

But never before had M. Leuwen come so near to lying to his wife as at that moment. Since his success in the Chamber had not cost him any trouble he could not believe in its duration, scarcely in its reality. Therein lay the illusion, the touch of madness, as well as the proof of the extreme pleasure he took in his success and the unbelievable position he had created for himself in three months. Had M. Leuwen brought to this affair the sang-froid which never deserted him in the most difficult financial matters he would have said to himself:

"This is a new way of using the power which I have always possessed. It is a steam engine which I had never thought of operating in this way before."

The flood of new sensations produced by such an astonishing triumph had quite got the better of M. Leuwen's habitual

common sense, and it was this that he was ashamed to admit even to his wife. After endless discussion, M. Leuwen could no longer deny his weakness.

"Well then, yes!" he said at last, "I am suffering from an access of ambition, and the most amusing part of it is that I don't know what I want."

"Fortune is knocking at your door! You must make up your mind. If you don't open to her, she will knock at some other door."

"The miracles of the Almighty are wondrous to behold, especially when they operate on base and inert matter! I am about to make M. Grandet a Minister, or, at least, I am going to try."

"M. Grandet a Minister!" exclaimed Madame Leuwen, smiling. "But aren't you being unfair to Anselme? Why not consider him?"

(The reader has perhaps forgotten that Anselme was M. Leuwen's old and faithful valet.)

"Just as he is, with all his sixty years," M. Leuwen replied with that jocular seriousness he liked to affect, "Anselme would be far better for the affairs of State than M. Grandet, and, given a month to get over his astonishment, would settle questions, especially serious ones where great common sense is needed, much more wisely. But Anselme does not have a wife who is on the point of becoming the mistress of my son; and if I put Anselme in the Ministry of the Interior, the whole world would not see that it is really Lucien who is Minister in his person."

"Oh! but what is this you are telling me?" cried Madame Leuwen. And the smile, which had greeted the enumeration of Anselme's virtues, instantly vanished. "You are going to jeopardize my son's happiness. Lucien will be the victim of that restless spirit, of that woman who is always running about looking

for happiness like a soul in pain, without ever finding it. She will make him as unhappy and uneasy as herself. How can Lucien fail to be shocked by the vulgarity of such a nature?"

"Ah, but she is the prettiest woman in Paris, or at least the most prominent. It would be impossible for a woman, so very virtuous till now, to have a lover without all Paris knowing it; and if the lover himself has a name at all well-known in society, this choice places him in the very first rank."

After a long discussion which was not without its charm for her, Madame Leuwen in the end conceded this point. She confined herself to insisting that Lucien was far too young to be presented to the public, especially to the Chamber, as a young business man and politician.

"Lucien makes a great mistake," M. Leuwen observed, "to affect such an elegant appearance and to dress so fashionably. And at the first opportunity I intend to speak to Madame Grandet on the subject. . . . In short, my dear, I count on driving Madame de Chasteller out of his heart. For, I can admit it to you now, I was really worried.

"I wonder," M. Leuwen continued, "if you know what admirable work Lucien is doing at the Ministry? I have excellent reports about him from Dubreuil, who has been assistant department head since the retirement of my friend Cretet twenty-five years ago. Lucien expedites more business than three section chiefs. He has not let himself be spoiled by any of the stupidities that fools call custom, the *daily round* of business. He decides questions promptly and boldly, in such a way as to dispose of them once and for all. He has declared himself the enemy of the Ministry's stationer, for he insists upon letters of only ten lines. In spite of his experience in Caen, he always acts in this bold, decided manner. And remember that, as we agreed, I have never told him my opinion of his conduct in the election of M. Mairobert. I have, of course, defended it

indirectly in the Chamber, but he may have thought my remarks merely a matter of family solidarity.

"I shall have him appointed Secretary General if I can. Should they refuse me that on account of his age, the office will remain vacant. But even as private secretary Lucien will be Secretary General in fact, and take over those functions. He will either break his neck in a year, or he will make a reputation for himself, and I shall idiotically say:

I have done my best  
All that friendship could do  
To make your fate blest  
And sweeter for you.

"For my part, I get myself out of a predicament. People will see that I have made Grandet Minister because my son is not yet ripe for office. If I fail, I'll have nothing to reproach myself with; fortune had not knocked at my door. If I succeed, my worries will be over for six months."

"Will M. Grandet be able to last that long?"

"There are reasons for and against it. He will have all the imbeciles with him, and he will run his house on a scale that will cost him a hundred thousand francs beyond his ministerial salary. That is enormous. He will lack absolutely nothing but wit in discussion, and common sense in business."

"A mere nothing!" commented Madame Leuwen.

"On the whole the best fellow in the world. In the Chamber you know how he will speak. He will read like a lackey the excellent speeches which I shall order from the best ghost writers at a hundred louis for every *successful* speech. And I shall speak myself. But will I have the same success in defense that I have had in attack? That is what I am curious to see, and the uncertainty intrigues me. My son and our little Coffe will furnish me with the body of my defensive speeches. . . . All this may be very dull, I really think . . ."

*[The chapter breaks off here. The fragment that follows was written in the manuscript on the back of the last page of the conversation between M. and Madame Leuwen.]*

But in reality Madame Leuwen was very much shocked by the feminine side of this arrangement.

"It is in very bad taste, and I am surprised that you would lend yourself to such things."

"But don't you know, my dear, that half the history of France is based on just such exemplary arrangements? Three quarters of the fortunes of our great families, now so high and mighty, were established by the hands of love."

"But what love, Great God!"

"Are you going to quarrel with the respectable name which French historians have adopted? Be careful or I shall use the exact word. From François I to Louis XV, the Ministry has always been the gift of great ladies, in the case of at least two-thirds of the vacancies. When our nation is not in the throes of an upheaval, she always reverts to these customs which are natural to her. And is it wrong to do what has always been done?" (This was M. Leuwen's true morality, but his wife, born under the Empire, had a sterner code more suitable to a budding despotism.)

She found some difficulty in reconciling herself to her husband's ethics.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THERE WAS nothing romantic either in the character or in the habits of Madame Grandet, a fact which, for those with eyes to see and who were not dazzled by her queenly bearing and a complexion worthy of a young English girl, was strangely at variance with her conversational style as extravagantly sentimental and emotional as a novel by Nodier. She never said: *Paris*, but: *this vast city*. Romantic by affectation only, Madame Grandet brought to the management of her affairs a faultless judgment and the orderliness and meticulousness of a little shopkeeper who sells needles, and cloth by the yard.

When she had become somewhat accustomed to the joy of being a Minister's wife, she began to wonder whether perhaps M. Leuwen, because of his distress at seeing his son the victim of a hopeless passion, or at least in danger of making himself ridiculous, had not overestimated his strength. It never occurred to her to doubt Lucien's love. She knew love only through the bad replicas generally to be seen in society, and had not the eyes to perceive it where it sought seclusion. The great question to which Madame Grandet kept reverting was this:

"Is M. Leuwen really powerful enough to make a Minister? In spite of his almost inaudible voice, he is unquestionably a very popular orator, the only man the Chamber listens to—that no one can deny. They say the King receives him secretly. He is on the best terms with Marshal Soult, Minister of War. The combination of all these circumstances constitutes, without doubt, a brilliant position. But that does not necessarily mean

that he can persuade a man as subtle and clever at dissembling as the King to entrust a Ministry to M. Grandet." And Madame Grandet heaved a deep sigh.

Tormented by this uncertainty, which in two days' time had almost completely undermined her happiness, Madame Grandet suddenly made up her mind. She boldly asked M. Leuwen for an interview, and had the temerity to fix the rendezvous at her own house. . . .

"This affair is so important *for us*," Madame Grandet began, "that I hardly think you will find it strange if I beg you to give me some further details in regard to the hopes you have led me to entertain."

"So," thought M. Leuwen, smiling to himself, "we don't discuss the price, we only want to be sure that the goods will be delivered."

In the sincerest and friendliest tone, M. Leuwen replied:

"It makes me happy indeed, Madam, to see the ties of our old and excellent friendship being more and more closely knit. From now on they must be intimate enough to admit of that degree of easy frankness and openhearted candor which will permit me to speak to you in a language free from all vain dissembling . . . as though you were already one of the family."

At these words, M. Leuwen could hardly refrain from giving her a sly wink.

"I have no need, I am sure, to ask you for absolute discretion. I shall not hide from you a fact which, indeed, with your penetrating as well as logical mind you must already have surmised: M. de Vaize is on the alert. One single indication, one single fact brought to him by one of his hundred spies—the Marquis de G——, for example, or M. R——, whom you know well, would be enough to upset all our little plans. M. de Vaize sees the Ministry about to escape him and he has not, one must

admit, remained idle: he makes ten calls every day before eight o'clock in the morning. The Deputies are flattered because such an hour is unheard of in Paris. It reminds them of their own activity in the past when they were public prosecutors' clerks.

"Like myself, M. Grandet represents the Bank, and since July the Bank is the head of the State. The bourgeoisie has taken the place of the Faubourg Saint-Germain and now the Bank has become the nobility of the bourgeois class. M. Laffitte, believing that all men are angels, lost the Ministry for his class. Present circumstances call upon high finance to recapture control and once more to take possession of the Ministry. . . . Bankers have been accused of stupidity. Happily, the Chamber has given me a chance to prove that on occasion we are capable of overwhelming our adversaries with remarks which will not be so easily forgotten. I know better than anyone that such remarks are not arguments. But the Chamber dislikes arguments and the King likes only money. He needs a great many soldiers to check the working men and the republicans. It is to the interest of the government to keep on good terms with the Bourse. A Ministry cannot overthrow the Bourse, but the Bourse can overthrow the Ministry. The present Ministry cannot last much longer."

"That is what M. Grandet says."

"M. Grandet has sound enough views; but, since you allow me to speak to you as an intimate friend, I must confess to you, Madam, that if it had not been for you I should never have dreamed of M. Grandet for the Ministry. Let me ask you plainly: do you think you have enough authority with your husband to influence him when it comes to the capital decisions of his Ministry? It will take all your skill to handle the Minister of War. The King insists upon an army, and only the Marshal can administer and control it. But the King also loves money, wants piles of money, and he looks to the Minister of

Finance to furnish it. M. Grandet will have to keep a nice balance between the Minister of War and the Minister of *Money*, or else there will be an explosion. At present, for example, the differences between the Marshal and the Minister of Finance have caused more than a dozen ruptures, always followed, until now, by as many reconciliations. But the bitterness of the two sides has reached such a point that not even the most innocuous subjects can be discussed.

"Money is not only the sinews of war, but also of this kind of armed peace we have enjoyed since the July Days. In addition to money for the army, so indispensable against the workers, places must be found for the whole bourgeois general staff. They have at least six thousand gabblers who will turn their eloquence against you, if you don't silence them with posts worth six thousand francs. Constantly in need of money, the Marshal undoubtedly has his eye on a banker as next Minister of the Interior. Just between ourselves, what he wants is someone he can use, if necessary, against the Minister of Finance, someone who understands the fluctuating values of currency at different times of the day. The question now is, will the name of this Banker-Minister of the Interior, of this man who understands the Bourse and can, to a certain extent, control the maneuvers of M. de Rothschild or of the Minister of Finance, be Leuwen or Grandet? As for me, I am really too lazy for the job, and without mincing words, too old. I cannot yet make my son Minister. He is not a Deputy. I don't even know if he can speak in public or not—but I do know that for the last six months you have rendered him completely dumb. . . . But what I *can* do is to put into the Ministry of the Interior a suitable man who is the choice of the person who is going to save my son's life."

"I do not doubt the sincerity of your good intentions toward *us*."

"Which, I take it, Madam, means that you rather doubt—

and in this I find another reason for admiring your prudence—that you doubt my power to do so. In any discussion on the high interests of the Crown or of politics doubt is a paramount duty and cannot be considered an affront by either of the contracting parties. One may very well deceive oneself and jeopardize, not only the interests of a friend, but one's own as well. I have told you that I might consider M. Grandet. You somewhat doubt my power. It is naturally not in my power to offer you the portfolio of the Interior or of Finance as I would offer you a bunch of violets. With things as they are today, even the King cannot make you such a gift. A Minister, after all, must be elected by five or six persons, each one with the right merely to *veto* the choice of the others. He cannot absolutely guarantee the election of his candidate. Besides, Madam, you must not forget that, in the end, it is necessary not only to satisfy the King entirely and the Chamber of Deputies to a certain extent, but also not to offend that poor Chamber of Peers unduly. It is for you, lovely lady, to decide whether or not you choose to believe that I intend to do everything in my power to install you in the Ministry on the Rue de Grenelle. Before estimating the degree of my devotion to your interests, try to decide to your own satisfaction the exact weight of the influence which for two or three times twenty-four hours chance has put into my hands.”

“I do believe in you, utterly,” rejoined Madame Grandet. “My very willingness to discuss such a subject with you is proof enough. But it hardly follows that because I have confidence in your ability and your luck . . . that I am willing to make the sacrifice you seem to expect.”

“I should be miserable if I thought I was wounding in the slightest degree that enchanting delicacy of your sex which adds such charms to the bloom of youth, and even to the most perfect beauty. But Madame de Chevreuse, the Duchesse de Longueville and, in fact, all the women whose names have

left their mark on history and who—which is more to the point—have established the fortune of their house, sometimes had interviews with their doctors. Well, I am the doctor of the soul, the mentor of that noble ambition which your admirable position has inevitably kindled. In an age, in the midst of a society built on quicksands, where everything is unstable, where everything is crumbling, your superior intelligence, your great fortune, M. Grandet's well-known courage, and your own personal advantages have created for you a solid, impregnable position, independent of the caprices of power. There is only one enemy you have to fear: Fashion. For the moment, you are her favorite. But Fashion, without the least regard for personal merit, inevitably proves fickle. If in a year or eighteen months you present nothing new for the admiration of this society, which for the moment does you justice and places you in so exalted a position, you will be in danger. The least trifle—a carriage not in the best of taste, an illness, a mere nothing—and, in spite of your youth, you will be relegated to the ranks of past glories.”

“I have known the truth of what you say for a long time,” retorted Madame Grandet with a touch of annoyance, like a queen who has been inopportunately reminded of a defeat suffered by her armies. “Yes, I have known this great truth for a long time: Fashion is a fire which dies without fresh fuel.”

“There is another truth,” added M. Leuwen, “no less startling and no less pertinent: a patient who turns against his physician, or a litigant who turns against his lawyer instead of reserving his strength to fight his adversaries, is hardly on the eve of changing his position for the better.”

M. Leuwen rose.

“My charming lady, moments are precious. Do you want to treat me as one of your adorers and try to make me lose my head? I must reply that I have no head to lose any longer, and will seek my fortune elsewhere.”

"What a cruel man you are! Very well then, speak!"

Madame Grandet was wise to give up her high-flown style. M. Leuwen, much more a man of pleasure and of changing moods than a man of business or of ambition, found it sufficiently ridiculous to let his plans depend on a woman's whims, and was already turning over in his mind some other means of advancing Lucien's standing in the public eye.

"I am certainly not made for the Ministry," he had been saying to himself while Madame Grandet was talking. "I am too lazy, I am too accustomed to enjoying myself. I never take tomorrow into consideration. If, instead of a little Parisian society woman talking nonsense and beating about the bush, I were face to face with the King, I would be just as impatient, and would never be forgiven. I must concentrate all my efforts on my son."

"Madam," he said, as though bringing his thoughts back from far away, "do you want to talk to me as to an old man of sixty-five who is for the moment politically ambitious, or do you want to continue to do me the honor of treating me as a handsome young man, dazzled—as they all are—by your charms?"

"Speak! Speak, my dear friend," Madame Grandet returned eagerly, for she was quick to read in their eyes the decisions of her interlocutors, and she began to be frightened. It seemed to her—which was true—that M. Leuwen had reached the end of his patience.

"One of us must have confidence in the other's loyalty."

"In that case—to answer you with all the frankness you have insisted on as a duty—why should *I* be that one?"

"The force of circumstances, my dear lady, will have it so. What I ask of you—your stake, as it were, if you will permit me so common an expression, but at least perfectly clear" (and M. Leuwen's tone lost some of its urbanity and verged on that of a man selling a piece of land who has just named his final

price), "what constitutes your stake in this grand intrigue of lofty ambitions, is entirely within your own control, while the quite enviable position I am offering you for sale depends on the King, and on the opinion of four or five persons who, for the moment, deign to place great confidence in me but who, after all, have ideas of their own. Besides, at any moment—after a failure on my part in the Chamber, for example—they might very well withdraw it. In this great combination of State and high ambition, the one who is already in a position to pay the price, or as you have permitted me to call it, the stake, must make the payment or, I am afraid, the other contracting party will have more admiration for her prudence than for her sincerity. And the other, whose stake is not at his disposal—myself, in other words—must do everything humanly possible which the other may demand to furnish her guarantees."

Madame Grandet remained thoughtful, and visibly embarrassed not so much over what her reply should be, as how best to formulate it. M. Leuwen, who was in doubt about the final result, for an instant had the malicious idea of putting off the decision until the following day. The night would bring counsel. But because of his natural indolence, his reluctance to return the next day, he was anxious to finish on the spot. So now, lowering his voice a little and speaking in the deep tones of M. de Talleyrand, he familiarly added:

"These occasions, my dear friend, which make or unmake the fortunes of a house, present themselves once in a lifetime, and present themselves in a more or less agreeable manner. The particular road to the temple of Fortune which I propose is one of the least thorny I know of. But will you have the strength of character? After all, the problem for you boils down to this: "Shall I or shall I not trust M. Leuwen whom *I have known for fifteen years*? In order to reply to that question coolly and wisely, ask yourself: 'What did I think of M.



Leuwen, and would I have deemed him worthy of my confidence two weeks ago, before there was any question of a political transaction between us?"

"Perfect confidence!" cried Madame Grandet with relief, as though happy to do M. Leuwen a justice which relieved her of a painful doubt. "Perfect confidence!"

Then, with the resigned air of someone agreeing to the inevitable, M. Leuwen said:

"In two days, at the latest, I shall have to present M. Grandet to the Marshal."

"M. Grandet *dined* at the Marshal's less than a month ago," Madame Grandet, somewhat piqued, hastened to assure him.

"I underestimated this feminine vanity," he thought, "I judged her less stupid."

"Naturally, I cannot have the pretension of acquainting the Marshal with the person of M. Grandet. Everyone who knows anything of high finance in Paris knows M. Grandet, his financial genius, his wealth, his luxurious hôtel; he is known, above all, because of that most distinguished woman in Paris whom he has honored with his name. The King himself holds him in high consideration, his courage is famous. What I shall say to the Marshal is simply this: 'Here is M. Grandet, an excellent financier who understands all the intricacies of the money market, a man who, should His Excellency choose to make him Minister of the Interior, would be able to hold his own against the Minister of Finance. I should of course support M. Grandet with all the power of my feeble voice.' That is all I meant by presenting M. Grandet to the Marshal. In three days," added M. Leuwen, still speaking rather sharply, "if I do not say that, then, in justice to myself, I shall have to say instead: 'After due consideration I have decided that, with my son to assist me, if you will give him the title of Under-Secretary of State, I will accept the Ministry.' Do you think that after presenting M. Grandet, I am a man capable of saying

to the Marshal in private: 'Don't believe a word of what I said to you in front of M. Grandet, I want to be Minister myself?'

"But I do not doubt your good faith in the least," cried Madame Grandet. "You are putting a patch where there is no sign of a hole. You fail to realize how strange is the request you ask of me. You are a libertine, your well-known opinion of what constitutes the whole dignity of our sex prevents you from appreciating the full extent of the sacrifice. What will Madame Leuwen say? How can it be kept from her?"

"In a thousand ways; by an anachronism, for example."

"You must forgive me—I am in no state to continue this discussion. Do be good enough to postpone until tomorrow the conclusion of our conversation."

"As you wish! But tomorrow, will I still be Fortune's favorite? If you will have none of my suggestion, then I must make other arrangements, and endeavor to distract my son—who is my sole concern in this entire affair—by arranging a fine marriage. Remember that I have no time to lose. The absence of a definite reply tomorrow means a *no* which it will be impossible to reconsider."

Madame Grandet had just had the idea of first consulting her husband.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

**M**LEUWEN is a passionately devoted father," Madame Grandet began by explaining. "His chief motive, his greatest worry in this whole affair, is the pronounced taste manifested by M. Lucien Leuwen for Mademoiselle Raimonde of the ballet."

"Like father, like son, egad!"

"That is what I was thinking," laughed Madame Grandet, adding more seriously, "You are going to have to make this matter your personal concern, or you'll lose M. Leuwen's voice."

"That's a fine voice you're promising me."

"You are intelligent, I know, but as long as that little voice is listened to, as long as his sarcasms are the fashion with the Chamber, he can, they say, make and unmake Ministers, and no one would take a chance of forming a Ministry without him."

"What a joke! A banker who is half Dutch, notorious for his charming friends at the Opera—and who refused to be Captain of the National Guard!" This last was added with a tragic air, for M. Grandet's ambition dated from the June Days. "In addition," he went on gloomily (he had been well received by the Queen), "in addition, a man known for his disgraceful jokes on everything which men in our station are bound to respect."

M. Grandet was fifty per cent a fool, ponderous and fairly well educated. Every evening he sweated blood for an hour *keeping up with French literature*, as he put it. But he would not have been able to tell the difference between a page of Voltaire and a page of M. Viennet. One can imagine his hatred for a man of wit who had had a triumph without making the slightest effort. That is what incensed him most.

Madame Grandet knew only too well that she could get nothing out of her husband until he had exhausted all the well-turned phrases the subject afforded. And the worst of it was that one phrase engendered another. M. Grandet had the habit of letting himself run on in this manner with the hope of developing some wit along the way. Had he lived in Lyons or Bourges instead of Paris, the method would have been justified.

After she had, by her silence, agreed with him on all M.

Leuwen's faults, this fertile subject occupying twenty minutes, Madame Grandet continued:

"You are now embarked on the road of lofty ambition. Do you remember the remark of Chancellor Oxenstierna to his son? . . ."

"Such remarks of great men are my breviary," cried M. Grandet. "I agree with them entirely: 'O my son, you will soon discover how little talent it takes to direct the great affairs of this world.'"

"There you are! For a man like you, M. Leuwen is only a stepping-stone. What difference does it make to you if he is worth anything or not? What is it to you if a Chamber made up of half-wits is amused by his bad jokes, and swallows his chatter from the rostrum as the significant eloquence of a true statesman? Remember that it was a weak woman, Madame de —, who, by speaking to another weak woman, the Queen of Austria, introduced the famous Cardinal Richelieu into the royal councils. No matter what he is, it is the part of wisdom to indulge M. Leuwen's mania so long as the Chamber has that of admiring him. But what I should like you to tell me—for, mixing as you do in different political circles, you are able to gauge, with a practiced eye, all that is happening—is the credit M. Leuwen now enjoys solid? For it does not enter into the proud and pure system of ethics which I follow, to make promises and not to observe them scrupulously." And she added petulantly, "That wouldn't suit me at all."

"Well, yes," replied M. Grandet reluctantly, "M. Leuwen is indeed in high credit at this moment. His stupid witticisms in the Chamber have hypnotized everybody. I am of the same opinion as our friend Viennet of the Académie Française—even in the matter of literary taste we are in full decadence. Leuwen has the backing of the Marshal who, above everything else, wants money and M. Leuwen, I don't know how or why, is the representative of the Bourse. He amuses the Marshal with

all his jests which are in execrable taste. It isn't difficult to be amusing if you allow yourself to say anything that comes into your head. The King, in spite of his exquisite taste, tolerates Leuwen's low wit. They even say that it was M. Leuwen who poisoned the King's mind against that poor de Vaize."

"Yes, but after all," cried Madame Grandet, "think of M. de Vaize as arbiter of the arts! What a farce! Did you know that when a picture of Rembrandt was proposed for purchase by the Museum, M. de Vaize wrote on the margin of the report: 'Find out what M. Rembrandt exhibited at the last Salon'?"

"At least," her husband retorted, "M. de Vaize is polite. Leuwen would sacrifice his best friend for a witticism."

"Tell me, do you think you would have the courage to appoint M. Lucien Leuwen, that silent son of a talkative father, as your Secretary-General?"

"What! A Second-Lieutenant of Lancers as Secretary-General? Such a thing has never been heard of! Is there no more seriousness left anywhere?"

"Alas, nowhere," sighed Madame Grandet. "There is certainly no seriousness left in our customs. It is deplorable. M. Leuwen was not even serious when he gave me his ultimatum, his condition *sine qua non*. . . . Only remember, my friend, if we make a promise we have to keep it."

"But to think of taking as Secretary-General a little sly-boots who even presumes to have ideas of his own! He would play the same role with me as that of M. de N—— with M. de Villèle. I am not anxious to harbor such an *intimate enemy*."

For another ill-humored twenty minutes, Madame Grandet had to endure the profound and witty remarks of this man, who, though more than half a fool, was trying to imitate Montesquieu, who failed to understand his position, and whose intelligence had been completely blocked by an income of a hundred thousand pounds. M. Grandet's heated reply, so fraught with interest, as he would have said, was as like as

two peas to a newspaper article by M. Salvandy or M. Viennet. But we shall spare our readers who undoubtedly read something in a similar vein this morning in their journals.

Knowing quite well that his only chance of obtaining the Ministry was through M. Leuwen, M. Grandet agreed to leave the assignment of the post of Secretary-General to him.

"As to his son's title," pursued Madame Grandet, "M. Leuwen will decide. Because of the Chamber, it would perhaps be as well for his son to remain private secretary just as he is today under M. de Vaize, but with the functions of Secretary-General."

"I don't care for all this hocus-pocus. In a loyal administration everyone should bear the title which corresponds to his functions."

"If that's the case," thought Madame Grandet, "you ought to have the title of steward to a clever woman who makes you a Minister."

Once more several minutes had to be sacrificed. Madame Grandet knew that this brave Colonel of the National Guard, her husband, could only be silenced through pure physical fatigue. Talking to his wife, he was *practicing* his wit for the Chamber of Deputies. One can imagine what grace and congruity such pretensions lent to a perfectly prosaic merchant who totally lacked imagination of any kind.

At last Madame Grandet was able to proceed:

"It will be necessary to stupefy M. Lucien Leuwen with work, in order to make him forget Mademoiselle Raimonde."

"Noble function, indeed!"

"It's the mania of that man who, by a ridiculous stroke of luck, has obtained power, full power, at this moment. And what is more respectable than a man in power?"

Ten minutes later they again spoke of Mademoiselle Raimonde. When M. Grandet had quite finished laughing at M.

Leuwen's primitive tastes, and had exhausted the subject, he at last proposed:

"Well, then why don't you employ a little coquetry to make the young man forget this ridiculous passion? It's just the thing. You could offer him your friendship."

Until this moment, M. Grandet *had been displaying wit*, but now he spoke in that tone of unadorned common sense which was natural to him. (The conference had reached its seventh quarter hour.)

"Possibly," Madame Grandet rejoined with the most perfect artlessness, but secretly overjoyed. ("This is an enormous step in advance," she thought, "but I had to be sure.")

She rose.

"It is an idea," she said to her husband, "but hardly an agreeable one for me."

"But, my dear, your reputation is such—and at the age of twenty-six and with all your beauty, your conduct so virtuous, so far above suspicion to everyone, even above the envy aroused by my success, that you have every right, within the limits of modesty and, naturally, of honor, to permit yourself whatever may serve our advancement in the world."

("He talks about my reputation as he would talk about the good points of his horses.")

"It was not merely yesterday that the name of Grandet began to enjoy the esteem of respectable people. We were not born in a cabbage patch."

"Good Lord," thought Madame Grandet, "he's going to begin talking about his ancestor, the Captain of Toulouse!" And she hastened to interpose.

"Just stop to consider, M. le Ministre, the extent of the program you thus endorse. Any sudden change in my entourage might lead to gossip and damage my reputation. Once M. Lucien is admitted on a footing of intimacy, whatever he is to us during the first two months of your Ministry, such he must

remain for two years at least, even if M. Leuwen should lose favor with the Chamber and with the King, or—which isn't likely—even if your Ministry should fall . . .”

“Ministries,” replied M. Grandet, somewhat nettled, “last at least three years. The Chamber has still four Budgets to vote.”

(“And now I've called down upon my head another fifteen minutes of high politics in his best countinghouse manner.”)

Madame Grandet was mistaken: exactly seventeen minutes passed before the conversation got back to the question of whether M. Grandet would consent to admit M. Lucien Leuwen as an intimate friend of the family for three years, if he admitted him for a month.

“But then people will say he is your lover.”

“That is a misfortune from which I should suffer more than anyone. I expected you to try to console me. . . . But, to come to the point, do you or don't you want to be Minister of the Interior?”

“I want to be Minister, but only like Colbert, by honorable means.”

“And where is the dying Cardinal Mazarin who is to present you to the King?”

This historic citation, so aptly brought forward, provoked M. Grandet's admiration. He mistook it for an argument and was convinced.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

**T**HAT EVENING Madame Grandet proposed a game of chess with Lucien. She was more animated and brilliant than usual, and her complexion was even more dazzling. Her beauty, which was of the first water, had nothing sublime or austere about it, in short, nothing to charm distinguished minds or terrify the vulgar. She enjoyed a conspicuous success with the fifteen or twenty persons who came up to the chess table during the game.

"And such a belle as this is practically running after me!" Lucien thought to himself as he gave her the pleasure of winning. "I must be a strange sort of animal not to be overjoyed."

All at once this thought occurred to him:

"I am in pretty much the same predicament as my father. I shall lose my standing in this drawing room if I don't profit by it. And who can tell if I won't regret it? I have always despised the position but I have not yet occupied it. I am a fool to despise it." Then, turning to Madame Grandet he said bitterly:

"For me, playing chess with you is a cruel privilege. Unless you respond to my fatal love there is nothing left for me but to blow out my brains."

"Very well then," she rejoined quickly, "live and love me! . . . But if you stay here any longer I feel that your presence will rob me of all my self-control. Leave me now. Talk to my husband for five minutes, and come back to me tomorrow at one o'clock."

"So now," Lucien said to himself as he climbed into his cabriolet, "I am a happy man."

He had hardly gone a hundred yards before he pulled up, and handed the reins over to his servant.

"I must really be happy," he decided, "since I am too upset to drive! And is the happiness society has to offer nothing more than that? My father is about to form a Ministry, he plays an enviable role in the Chamber, the most brilliant woman in Paris seems to be yielding to my so-called passion . . ."

But twist and turn his happiness as he would, the only comfort Lucien could squeeze out of it was summed up in his conclusion:

"Let us enjoy this good fortune lest, like a child, we regret it when it is gone."

A few days later, quitting his carriage at Madame Grandet's door, Lucien was suddenly beguiled by the loveliness of the moonlight flooding the Place de la Madeleine. Much to the astonishment of all the coachmen, instead of entering the house, he turned and walked away.

To escape their glances of curiosity, he went on a hundred paces and humbly lighted his cigar at a chestnut vendor's brazier. He then gave himself up to the contemplation of the beauty of the sky and to his own reflections.

Lucien had not been admitted to the secret of all his father's activities on his behalf, and we cannot deny that he was a bit flattered by his success with this Madame Grandet whose irreproachable conduct, rare beauty, and vast fortune added a certain glamour to Parisian society. Had she been able to add noble lineage to these other advantages, she would have been famous throughout Europe. But, do what she would, she could never entice any English *milords* to her drawing room.

Gradually, Lucien began to relish this good fortune of his, which had left him cold during the first few days. Madame

Grandet was the most impressive great lady he had ever known. For we must confess (although this may prejudice our hero in the eyes of those of our lovely feminine readers who, happily for them, enjoy too much nobility or too much wealth) that the infinite pretensions of the noble ladies de Commercy, de Marcilly, and other "cousins of the Emperor" destitute of fortune, whom he had met in Nancy, had always seemed to him ridiculous. . . .

"The cult of ancient ideas, of ultraism," thought Lucien, "is much more ridiculous in the provinces than in Paris. On second thought it is really less; for in the provinces, at least, that great body cannot be accused of energy. Filled with envy and fear, these two amiable passions make them forget to live."

These thoughts, summing up all Lucien's sensations in the provinces, spoiled for him Madame d'Hocquincourt's piquant charm, and the really superior wit of Madame de Puylaurens. That continual fear, that regret of a past one dares not defend, in Lucien's opinion, precluded all true superiority. But in Madame Grandet's drawing room, on the contrary, what luxury, what opulence, and what a complete absence of fear or envy!

"That is the only way to live," Lucien decided. And sometimes weeks passed by without his being shocked by any vulgar remark—the sort never heard in the drawing rooms of Madame d'Hocquincourt or Madame de Puylaurens. Such vulgar remarks, which betray a natural coarseness, were generally uttered by some Deputy of the Center who had sold himself to the Ministry for a decoration or a tobacco shop concession, and had not yet learned to wear a mask to conceal his ugliness. Much to his father's sorrow Lucien never addressed one word to these blockheads. As he passed by, he would hear them ponderously discussing the question of President Jackson's twenty-five million, or the sugar tax, or some other point

of political economy, without even trying to understand the fundamental principles involved.

"They are the very dregs of France," thought Lucien. "They are both stupid and venal, but at least they do not live in constant fear, they do not cry over the past, nor do they stupefy their children by allowing them to read nothing but the *Journée du Chretien*.

"In this age when only money counts, and everything is for sale, is there anything comparable to a great fortune spent with a clever and cautious hand? This fellow Grandet never pays out ten louis without considering his position in the world. Neither he nor his wife allow themselves those extravagances which I, a young man still living under my father's roof, indulge in."

He often overheard them haggling about the price of a theater box, or soliciting one gratis from the Château or the Ministry of the Interior.

Lucien saw Madame Grandet constantly surrounded by universal homage. But despite all this philosophy, a certain monarchic instinct that still lingered in the carriage class insinuated that it would be more flattering to be admired by a woman who bore one of the great names of the old monarchy.

"Should I succeed (out of the question for me, of course) in being received in the legitimist drawing rooms of Paris, the only difference from those of Nancy would be that M. de Serpierre's and Madame de Marcilly's three or four Chevaliers de Saint-Louis would be replaced by four Dukes or Peers claiming, like M. de Saint-Lérant at Madame de Marcilly's, that the Emperor Nicholas had a treasure of six hundred million francs in a little chest bequeathed to him by the Emperor Alexander for the purpose of exterminating all the Jacobins in France whenever he got around to it. There is surely an Abbé Rey here too tyrannizing over the pretty women of the nobility, poor things, and terrifying them into spending two

hours listening to the sermons of some Abbé Poulet. The mistress I should have then, even if her ancestors could be traced back to the Creation, would be obliged, in spite of herself, like Madame d'Hocquincourt, to join in discussions of twenty minutes, at least, on the merits of the Bishop of —'s last charge to his clergy. The Holy Fathers who had burned John Huss at the stake would be lauded with the most finished elegance, but how that elegance would betray the underlying hardness of heart! The moment I meet with it I am on my guard. It pleases me in books, but in life it chills me, and, at the end of a quarter of an hour, arouses my antipathy.

"Absurdity of this sort in Madame Grandet, thanks to her bourgeois name, is entirely restricted to her morning calls on Madame de Thémînes, Madame Toniel and other daughters of the Church. I should be let off with a few words of respect for all that is respectable, repeated once a week.

"The men I meet at Madame Grandet's have, at least, *done* something, if only to make a fortune. Whether they have acquired it through business, or newspaper articles, or by selling speeches to the government, they have at any rate been active.

"The society I mingle with at my mistress's," and Lucien laughed as he said the word, "is like a story badly written but interesting because of its subject matter. Madame de Marcilly's world is made up of absurd, or even hypocritical theories based on imaginary facts clothed in polite language. But the elegance of the style is constantly belied by the asperity of the glances. All that unctuous eloquence, in imitation of Fénelon, exudes, for anyone with somewhat keener senses, a delicate yet penetrating aroma of knavery and rascality.

"At a Parisian Madame de Marcilly's I might gradually acquire that habit of a total lack of interest in what I am saying, as well as the use of those expressions, so often recommended by my mother, which dilute the thought. Sometimes I really begin to regret that I never acquired those Nineteenth Cen

ture virtues—but I should bore myself too terribly. I count on old age to take care of all that.

“I have noticed that the unfailing effect of this sort of elegance, which belongs to a handful of youthful inhabitants of the Faubourg Saint-Germain who have acquired it without, for all that, leaving their wits at school, is simply to spread around the *accomplished* person an atmosphere of profound distrust. His elegant conversation is like an orange tree planted in the middle of the Compiègne Forest—pretty, but out of place in our age.

“Fortune did not see fit to have me born into that world. And why change myself? What do I ask of their world? My eyes, as Madame de Chasteller told me a dozen times, would always betray me. . . .”

Abruptly Lucien’s flow of words was interrupted by that name, as, by the crowing of the cock, were those of that weak man who, when taunted, denied his Friend, arrested for His political opinions. Like Bartolo in Rossini’s *Barber*, Lucien stood motionless. Eight or ten times already, since Madame Grandet had made him a happy man, Madame de Chasteller’s image had risen before his mind’s eye, but never so vividly as at that moment. He had always banished it with some hasty excuse, such as: “My heart is not involved in this affair. This is purely and simply a matter of youth and ambition.” Nevertheless, until this sudden evocation of Madame de Chasteller, he had done everything in his power to prolong his new liaison. Madame Grandet was not only causing him to break his relations with Mademoiselle Raimonde, but even with the cherished, the sacred memory of Madame de Chasteller. The iniquity was infinitely greater.

Two months before, in the collection of the heavenly porcelains of M. Constantin, he had come upon a head which, because of its resemblance to Madame de Chasteller, had brought a sudden blush to his cheek. He had had it copied by a young

painter. While the work was being done, he haunted the artist's studio, who was touched by his tender eagerness and became his friend. Lucien would fly to the studio as though to do penance before this holy image. I wonder whether he will be eternally disgraced if we confess that, like the famous character with whom we have had the temerity to compare him, "when he thought thereon he wept"?

Toward the end of the evening, he decided to drop in at Madame Grandet's for a moment. He was a different man, and Madame Grandet at once noticed the change. A week ago this subtle spiritual change would have escaped her. Although she did not admit it to herself, she was no longer entirely governed by ambition. She had begun to have a taste for this serious young man, who was not dull like the others. She found in him an indefinable charm. Had she had more experience or more intelligence, she would have characterized Lucien's way of being different, which so attracted her, as *natural*. She had already passed her twenty-sixth birthday; she had been married seven years and, for the last five, had reigned over the most brilliant, if not the most aristocratic society of Paris. Even when alone with her, no man had ever dared to kiss her hand.

The next day a disturbing scene occurred between Madame Grandet and M. Leuwen. Acting with complete honesty in the whole affair, M. Leuwen had hastened to introduce M. Grandet to the old Marshal. A man of great good sense and energy, when he did not let himself sink into a state of torpor through laziness or ill humor, the Marshal had asked this future colleague four or five rather direct questions. Unaccustomed to such plain speaking, the great banker had replied in well-rounded, pompous periods. At this, the Marshal, who detested high-sounding phraseology, first of all because it is detestable, and also because he never knew what to do about it, had turned his back on M. Grandet.

"Why, your man's a fool!" he had said to M. Leuwen.

M. Grandet had arrived home pale and in despair, and for the remainder of the day did not have the heart to compare himself to Colbert. For he had just enough discernment to know that he had been supremely disliked by the Marshal. It must be said that the rudeness of the old General, bored and eaten up with bile, was in proportion to the alertness of M. Grandet's reactions.

The latter recounted his misfortune to his wife, who, while overwhelming her husband with flattery, at once jumped to the conclusion that M. Leuwen had deceived her. Madame Grandet despised her husband, as every honest woman should, but she did not despise him nearly enough.

"What is my husband's real function?" she had been asking herself for the last three years. "He is a banker and a Colonel of the National Guard. Very good, as a banker he makes money, as a Colonel he is brave. These two callings are of mutual aid to each other: as a Colonel he can get promotions in the Legion of Honor for certain regents of the Bank of France and of the syndicate of stockbrokers, who, in turn, from time to time arrange a thirty-six hour loan of a million or two with which he can manipulate the market. But M. de Vaize exploits the Bourse through the telegraph, as M. Grandet does through a rise in the market. Two or three other Ministers follow M. de Vaize's example, nor is the *Master of them all* less enterprising, by any means! He even ruins them on occasion, as in the case of poor Castelfulgens. On one score at least my husband is superior to all of them: he is a very brave Colonel."

Madame Grandet was under the delusion that no one ever noticed her ponderous husband's appalling mania for appearing witty. But no man was ever blessed by nature with less imagination for everything except hard cash lost or won on the money market. Everything people said seemed to him,



unmitigated merchant that he was, simple persiflage for the sake of ensnaring the customer.

For the last four or five years, during which her husband, who considered M. Thourette's luxury a challenge to his honor, had been entertaining lavishly, Madame Grandet was accustomed to seeing him surrounded by flatterers. One day a M. Gamont, a little hunchback, clever, poor and not too well dressed, had dared express an opinion which slightly differed from that of M. Grandet on the greater or lesser beauty of the Auch Cathedral. On the instant, M. Grandet had driven him out of the house with such coarseness and such a barbarous display of the tyranny of money over poverty that it had shocked even Madame Grandet. Several days later she sent the poor man an anonymous letter enclosing five hundred francs, supposedly in payment of a loan. Three months later the poor fellow abjectly allowed himself to be invited once again to dinner by M. Grandet.

When M. Leuwen told Madame Grandet the truth—toned down considerably—on the subject of M. Grandet's replies to the old Marshal—their emptiness, their platitude, their affected elegance, she gave him to understand with that haughty disdain which suited her particular kind of beauty, that she believed he was deceiving her.

Whereupon, M. Leuwen behaved exactly like a young man: he was in despair over the accusation, and for the next three days his sole preoccupation was to prove to her the injustice of her suspicions.

What complicated the situation was that the King who, for the last five or six months, had become more and more averse to positive decisions, had sent his son to the Minister of Finance to arrange a reconciliation with the old Marshal (prepared, of course, when the reconciliation no longer suited him, to repudiate his son and banish him to the country). The reconciliation took place. The Marshal had been quite ready

to agree to it since he was most anxious to have a certain supply of horses paid for before he left the Ministry of War. The agent responsible for the transaction, M. Salomon C—, had very wisely stipulated that the hundred thousand franc security from the Marshal's son, as well as the profits accruing to him, should be paid out of the funds provided by the order signed by the Minister of Finance. Although perfectly aware of the speculation on this purchase of horses, the King knew nothing of this last little detail. Hearing of it from one of his spies in the Ministry of Finance, who made his reports to the King's sister, the King was humiliated and furious not to have guessed it himself. In his anger he was on the point of sending the Chief of his Secret Police to Algiers in command of a brigade. The King's politics in regard to his Ministers would have been quite different had he been certain of the Marshal for two weeks longer.

M. Leuwen knew nothing of all this, and took the delay of two weeks as just another symptom of timid vacillation, or even of a deterioration of the King's capacities. But this explanation he failed to communicate to Madame Grandet. It was a principle of his that there were certain things one did not confide to women.

As a result, although he spoke with absolute frankness and perfect good faith on everything except this one point, Madame Grandet, her wits at this moment sharpened by the keenest anxiety, felt that he was holding something back.

Aware of her suspicion, and being an honest man, M. Leuwen was in despair; and, like all his reactions, his despair was intense and violent. That same evening after dinner, not caring to discuss certain subjects before his wife, he left early for the Opera, taking his son with him. As soon as they arrived in their box, he carefully bolted the door. This precaution completed, he had the audacity to relate in detail and in the most casual manner, the bargain he had made with Ma-

dame Grandet. He forgot that he was not talking to a politician, and thereby committed a stupid blunder.

Lucien's vanity was dismayed. Suddenly he felt cold all over. For, unlike the heroes of popular novels, our hero was not absolutely perfect. He was not even perfect. He had been born in Paris, and consequently with a propensity to vanity of an unbelievably powerful kind.

This inordinate Parisian vanity was not, however, united in Lucien with its vulgar companion, the stupid belief in perfections he did not possess. For example he had often said to himself:

"I shall never be successful with society women. I am too simple, too frank, I don't even know how to conceal my boredom, and am even less able to hide my love when it is sincere."

Then suddenly, and in the most unlooked-for fashion, Madame Grandet had burst upon the scene, with her queenly bearing, her incomparable beauty, her immense fortune, her irreproachable conduct, to give the lie to all these philosophic but pessimistic notions. Lucien had relished this good luck to the full.

"This success will certainly never be duplicated," he said to himself. "For, unless I am in love, I am incapable of winning a woman of strict virtue and one who enjoys a brilliant position in the world. Any success I may have, as Ernest has so often told me, will come through the dull and vulgar means of *love contagion*. I am too great a dunce to know how to seduce any woman at all, even a grisette. At the end of a week either she bores me and I drop her, or she pleases me too much, and knows it, and laughs at me. If poor Madame de Chasteller loved me, as I sometimes am tempted to believe, and still loved me after her misstep with that execrable Lieutenant-Colonel of Hussars—such a mediocre, dull, disgusting rival—it was not because I showed the least skill, but only because I loved her. . . . And how I do love her!"

Lucien paused a moment. His vanity was so acutely hurt at this moment, that this cry rose rather from the memory of love than from the actual sensation of its presence.

It was at the very moment when his affair with Madame Grandet was beginning to please him immensely, that his father's revelation came to destroy the whole scaffolding of his self-confidence. Only an hour earlier he had been saying to himself:

"For once Ernest was wrong when he predicted that never in my life would I win a respectable woman without being in love with her, in other words, that I could only succeed through pity and tears—what that miserable chemist calls the *watery way*."

His father's perfidious disclosure, coming as it did after a day of triumph, plunged him into bitter gloom.

"My father has been making a fool of me!"

Vanity kept Lucien from permitting himself to be disconcerted by the keen, searching glance his father fixed upon him. From this pitiless scoffer he was able to hide his cruel disappointment. M. Leuwen would have been happy could he have read his son's mind; he knew by experience that the same fund of vanity which makes misfortunes of this kind so painful, prevents them from being felt for very long. What really worried him was the interest Madame de Chasteller had inspired. He suspected nothing of Lucien's present state of mind, and thought his son a politician, who understood perfectly the King's position with his Ministers, exaggerating neither the wary cunning, nor the baseness invariably awakened by the cruel whip of Parisian mockery.

After a moment or two, M. Leuwen thought of nothing but coaching Lucien in the role he was to play with Madame Grandet, in order to convince her that his father was not betraying her in any way; that it was M. Grandet, with his heavy

pompousness, who had caused the damage which M. Leuwen was ready to do everything in his power to repair.

Happily for our hero, after an hour's session one of M. Leuwen's friends came to the box to speak to him.

"You're going to the Place de la Madeleine, aren't you?" M. Leuwen made a point of asking, as his son left.

"Yes, of course," replied Lucien with Jesuitical veracity.

He did indeed go, and with all haste, to the Place de la Madeleine. It was the only place in the neighborhood where he was sure of being alone and undisturbed, for he had now become quite an important personage, and much sought after.

"No," he said to himself as he paced up and down, "I can never hope to win first prize in a lottery; yes, I am a simpleton without wit enough to win a woman except through the maudlin means of *love contagion*.

"My father is like all fathers, and I never saw it before. With infinitely more intelligence—and even feeling—than the others, like them he wants to make me happy in his own way, not mine. And it is to satisfy someone else's whim that I have been stupefying myself with a preposterous amount of bureaucratic work, and of the most imbecilic kind besides. The other victims of the morocco armchairs are at least ambitious, like young Desbacs, for example. All those high-flown, ready-made phrases which I write with variations in the praiseworthy hope of making some Prefect, guilty of permitting a liberal café in his city, turn pale, or another swoon with delight who, without compromising himself, has won over a jury and sent a liberal journalist to prison, they find neat, suitable and *governmental*. They never stop to think that the man who signs them is a scoundrel. But a fool like me, overburdened with delicacy, has all the tedium of the job with none of its satisfactions. I do with distaste things I find both disgraceful and stupid. And sooner or later such flattering remarks as I now address to myself in private, I shall have the pleasure of hear-

ing uttered aloud in public. It won't be pleasant. I am only twenty-four and, unless an excess of intelligence is mortal, as old women say, I have still some time ahead of me. How much longer, in all conscience, can this castle of cards, this flimsy structure of shameless knavery last? Five years? Ten years? Twenty years? Not ten, I should say. When I am not yet forty, and the reaction against these rascals sets in, mine will be the most ignominious of roles. And," he added with a smile of bitterness, "the whip of satire will lash me for sins which never even amused me.

If you're going to be damned  
Be damned, at least, for amusing sins.

Desbacs, on the contrary, will have the best of it. But today he would be drunk with joy to find himself Master of Petitions, Prefect, Secretary-General, while I see in M. Lucien Leuwen only a perfect fool, an unconscionable blockhead. Even the mud of Blois couldn't wake you up. What can wake you then, poor wretch? Are you waiting for a personal insult?

"Coffe is right: I am a worse dupe than any of those vulgar souls who have sold themselves to the government. Yesterday, when he was talking about Desbacs & Co., didn't he remark with that inexorable coolness of his: 'The reason I don't despise them too much is that they haven't a penny to their names'?

"My rapid advancement—unheard of at my age—my talents, my father's position in the world, what has all that ever given me but this feeling of astonishment without pleasure: 'Is that all it amounts to?'

"It's high time I woke up. What do I need with a fortune? A five-franc dinner and a horse, isn't that all that I want at most? All the rest is often more of a bore than a pleasure, especially now that I can say: 'I am not despising what I know nothing about, like a silly philosopher à la Jean-Jacques.' Worldly success, smiles, shaking hands with country Deputies

and Sub-Prefects on leave, glances of coarse good will from everyone in a salon, I have known you all! I'll meet you again in a few minutes in the foyer of the Opera.

"But what if I quit Paris without going back to the Opera, and went to the only place in the world where for me is the *perhaps* of happiness? . . . In eighteen hours I could be in Nancy in the Rue de la Pompe!"

This idea monopolized all his thoughts for a whole hour. In the last few months our hero had become much bolder. He had observed at first hand the motives which actuate men in high positions. That sort of timidity, which, to an intuitive eye, reveals a great, sincere soul, had not been able to resist the growing knowledge of great worldly affairs. Had he decided to spend his whole life in his father's countinghouse, he might have become and remained a man of merit, and been known as such to one or two persons. He had now reached the point where he dared follow his first impulse, and stick to it until someone proved to him that he was wrong. And thanks to his father's irony, he found it impossible to deceive himself with specious reasoning.

These thoughts occupied him for the hour or more he spent restlessly wandering around the square.

"After all," he said to himself, "my only concern in all this is to spare my mother's feelings and my father's vanity. In six weeks my father will have forgotten those castles in Spain he has been building for a son who is much too much a peasant from the Danube to play the part his father has in mind: a clever man who would make a mighty breach in the Budget."

With these ideas established in his mind as new and incontestable facts, Lucien returned to the Opera. The light music, and the charming dancing of Mademoiselle Elssler filled him with a delight which surprised him. He thought vaguely to himself that he would not be enjoying all these fine things much longer and for that reason they failed to exasperate him.

While the music gave wings to his imagination, his mind was engaged in reviewing life's many possibilities.

"If only farming didn't bring one into contact with rascally peasants, and priests who instigate them against you, and with a Prefect who has your newspaper stolen at the post office—as I insinuated to that numskull Prefect of —, it would be the kind of work I'd like. To live in the country with Madame de Chasteller and to wrest from the land the twelve or fifteen thousand francs necessary for our modest comforts!

"Ah, America! No Prefects like M. de Séranville over there!" And all Lucien's old ideas on America and on M. de Lafayette came swarming back to him. When he used to meet M. de Lafayette at M. Destutt de Tracy's, he always imagined that all the people in America were imbued, not only with Lafayette's good sense, probity and lofty philosophy, but also with his elegant manners. He had been rudely undeceived. In America the majority rules and, for the most part, is made up of riffraff. "In New York the chariot of State has fallen into the opposite ditch from ours. Universal suffrage rules as a tyrant—a tyrant with dirty hands. If I don't happen to please my shoemaker he spreads slander about me which infuriates me, but I still have to flatter my shoemaker. Men are not weighed, they are only counted. The vote of the coarsest artisan is worth just as much as that of Jefferson, and often meets with greater understanding. Their clergy stupefies them, just as ours does—but they're even worse. They make travelers get out of the mail coach on Sunday, because traveling on Sunday is *mundane work* and a deadly sin. . . . Such universal, dismal barbarism would stifle me. . . . But I shall do just as Bathilde wishes. . . ."

For a long time he mused over this last thought, until suddenly it struck him with amazement. He was overjoyed to find it so firmly rooted in his mind.

"So there is absolutely no doubt about my having forgiven



her! It is not an illusion." Yes, he had entirely forgiven Madame de Chasteller her lapse from virtue. "Just as she is, for me she is the only woman in the world. . . . It would, I think, be more delicate never to let her suspect that I know of the consequence of her weakness for M. de Busant de Sicile. She will tell me of her own accord if she wants to tell me. All this stupid bureaucratic work has at least proved that I am capable, if necessary, of supporting myself and my wife."

"Proved it to whom?" sneered the opposition. "To people you will perhaps never see again and who, if you leave, will slander you the minute your back is turned."

Lucien was furious at this intrusion. "Ah, no, by heaven! It has proved it to *me*, and that is what counts. What do I care for the opinion of all those gentlemanly rascals who view with amazement my Cross and my rapid advancement. I am no longer that callow young Second-Lieutenant of Lancers leaving for Nancy to join his regiment, a slave to a hundred little weaknesses of vanity, and still smarting from that scorching remark of Ernest Dévelroy: 'Only too lucky to have a father who supplies your bread!' Bathilde told me some true things; and she made me compare myself with hundreds of other men, and the most highly thought of . . . Let's do as the world does and disregard the ethics of our official acts. Well then, I know that I can do twice as much work as the most plodding—consequently the most esteemed—department head, work, moreover, which I despise and which at Blois got me covered with mud—and well deserved, I'm afraid."

Absorbed by all this wealth of thought, Lucien knew almost perfect happiness. From time to time, the strains of a vigorous and virile orchestra and Mademoiselle Elssler's divinely graceful movements interrupted his reflections, lending them a seductive charm and potency. But more heavenly still was the image of Madame de Chasteller which almost constantly dominated his thoughts. This mixture of love and reasoning

made this evening's end, in an obscure corner of the stalls, one of the happiest of his life. But the curtain fell.

To return to the house, to engage in an amiable conversation with his father, would be to plunge once more into the distressing world of reality and, we confess, of boredom.

"I must not go home before two o'clock, or beware the paternal dialogue!"

Lucien went to an apartment hotel and took a little suite. He paid in advance, but they insisted on seeing his passport. An agreement was finally reached with the proprietor. Lucien promised not to sleep there that night, and to come back with his passport the following day.

Overjoyed, he walked around his little apartment whose handsomest piece of furniture was the idea: "Here I am free!" He was as pleased as a child at the thought of the false name he was going to give himself.

The idea of renting this little apartment at the corner of the Rue Lepelletier marked a turning point in Lucien's life. The first thing he did the next day was to go to the Hôtel de Londres with a passport obtained from M. Crapart, which bore the name: M. Théodore Martin of Marseille.

"I have to have a false passport to insure my liberty," he said to himself as he wandered happily through his new rooms. "Here I shall be entirely free from paternal, maternal, sempiternal solicitude!"

Yes, this was the very unfilial remark pronounced by our hero. And it grieves me, not so much for his sake as for the sake of human nature. So true is it that the instinct of liberty is ingrained in every heart, and that one does not thwart it with impunity in a country where irony has discouraged stupidity. An instant later Lucien reproached himself for his rudeness to his mother. But, after all, this excellent mother, without realizing it herself, had also assailed his liberty. Madame Leuwen fully believed that she had acted with the great-

est possible delicacy and address, for she had never once mentioned Madame de Chasteller. But a sentiment subtler than the wit of a Parisian woman, who has more wit, as everybody knows, than any other, made Lucien certain that his mother detested Madame de Chasteller. "But," Lucien thought, or rather felt without admitting it, "my mother should not be able either to like or dislike Madame de Chasteller; she should *not know of her existence.*"

One can be sure that, occupied by thoughts like these, Lucien had no intention of letting himself be stifled by all the dry-as-dust ideas current in Madame Grandet's drawing room, and still less of enduring all the endless handshakings. Yet, with what anxiety was his arrival awaited in that drawing room! That dark mask, which sometimes obscured Lucien's amiable qualities and made him appear in Madame Grandet's eyes as a cold philosopher, had completely transformed this woman who had always been so sensible and so ambitious.

"He does not try to make himself agreeable," she thought, "but, at least, he is absolutely sincere."

This remark was the first step toward a headlong plunge into emotions until now completely foreign to her—and so impossible!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

LUCIEN still had the bad habit and extreme imprudence of being natural in moments of intimacy, even when that intimacy had not flowered from true love. To dissimulate with someone whom one saw for four hours every day, seemed to him the most absurd thing in the world. This defect in Lucien, added to his air of candor, at first seemed to

Madame Grandet a mark of stupidity, later excited her amazement, and finally her keen interest—something Lucien could very well have done without. For, although Madame Grandet was the perfect example of the ambitious woman, supremely logical and solely preoccupied with the success of her schemes, she possessed, nevertheless, a woman's heart, but a heart which had not yet been touched by love. Lucien's naturalness should have been altogether ridiculous to a woman of twenty-six steeped in the cult of admiration and adoration for everything stamped with aristocratic approval. But, curiously enough, this very naturalness on the part of a man whose candid soul, foreign to all vulgar artifice, gave to everything he did a touch of oddness and a singular nobility, was the very thing best calculated to awaken a strange emotion in a heart which had remained insensible until then.

It must be admitted that when Lucien paid calls, after the first half hour he talked very little and not very well. In the first place he had never been known to stay anywhere more than half an hour, and, with the exception of Madame de Chasteller, he had never been on terms of intimacy with anyone. At present his relations with Madame Grandet disclosed this painful defect, one best calculated to wreck a man's fortune. Despite unbelievable efforts on his part, Lucien was absolutely incapable of dissimulating any change of mood, and never was there a nature more fundamentally changeable. This unfortunate trait, tempered somewhat by all the noblest habits of simple, exquisite courtesy instilled by a clever mother, had formerly seemed to Madame de Chasteller only an added charm. It had been for her a pleasing novelty, accustomed as she was to unfailing uniformity of temper, the masterpiece of that hypocrisy which is known today as a perfect education by people who are either too aristocratic or too rich, and which makes for an incurable dullness in the person who practices it, as well as in his *partner*. For Lucien, the recollection of an idea

that was precious to him, a day of storm clouds and North wind, the sudden sight of some new piece of knavery (or some other equally common occurrence) was quite enough to transform him on the instant. He had found only one remedy for the ridiculous affliction, so rare in our age, of taking things seriously. It was to be shut up in a little room alone with Madame de Chasteller, sure that the door was well guarded and would not open to any intruder who might unexpectedly appear.

After making all these ridiculous allowances, it must be said, that for a Lieutenant of Lancers, Lucien was at this moment more attractive than ever. But a Madame Grandet could hardly be expected to appreciate such allowances on behalf of an odd and ailing mind, and would naturally find them tiresome and odious. However, Lucien was often silent and absent. This natural disposition of his was aggravated by the mentality, anything but encouraging to a noble soul, typical of the persons who formed the habitual court around this famous hostess.

Be that as it may, Lucien, at the moment, was being awaited in this drawing room with the greatest anxiety. For the first hour of that evening which had caused such a revolution in Lucien's heart, Madame Grandet had reigned as usual over her court. Gradually she began to be a prey, first to amazement, and finally to the most violent anger. She was able to think of nothing but Lucien. And for Madame Grandet to keep her attention constantly fixed on one person was something utterly unheard of. She herself was not a little astonished to find herself in such a state. She was, however, firmly convinced that it was entirely due to vanity and wounded pride. With swelling breast, and eyelids drawn and unblinking (as they always became under the effect of physical pain, and only then) she kept questioning Deputies, and Peers, and any of the others who fed off the Budget, as they arrived one after the other in her drawing room. To none of them did she dare mention

openly the name which had been absorbing her attention all evening. In the hope that the name of M. Lucien Leuwen would sometime be inadvertently mentioned, she was obliged to hold them in interminable conversation.

Madame Grandet knew that Lucien had been invited to a hunting party which the Prince Royal was to give in the Forest of Compiègne, and that Lucien had made a bet of twenty-five louis against seventy that the first roebuck would be brought to bay in less than twenty-one minutes after it had been sighted. Lucien had been introduced into this exalted society through the favor of the old Marshal. This was by far the most flattering distinction that could be enjoyed by a young man attached to the government, or one bent on getting on in the world. And what a nice slice of the Budget could be expected within ten years by the man (the tenth) who hunted with the Prince Royal! The Prince had absolutely insisted on inviting ten persons only, for a writer of his suite had just discovered that *Monseigneur*, son of Louis XIV, and Dauphin of France, never permitted more than that number of courtiers on his wolf hunts.

"Is it possible," Madame Grandet wondered, "that perhaps the Prince Royal has sent word unexpectedly that he is receiving the future deer hunters of his party this evening?" But the poor Deputies and Peers who came to her drawing room were interested in more substantial things, and knew too little of that society where an attempt was being made to form a new Court, to be privy to such matters. This having occurred to her, she gave up trying to learn the truth from these gentlemen.

"But shouldn't he, in any case, have come here for a moment to let me know, or sent me a note at least? Such conduct is frightful!"

Eleven o'clock struck . . . eleven-thirty . . . midnight. Lucien did not appear.

"Oh! But it won't take me long to cure him of such charm-

ing ways!" thought Madame Grandet, quite beside herself with fury.

That night sleep never visited her eyes, as people who know how to write would say. Consumed by anger and grief, she sought for distraction in what her dutiful friends called her *historical studies*. She had her maid begin by reading to her from Madame de Motteville's *Mémoires*, the one book which only the day before had seemed the most perfect manual for a woman of the great world. Tonight these beloved memoirs appeared devoid of all interest. She finally even had recourse to the very novels she had for eight years been denouncing in long moral dissertations in her drawing room.

All night long poor Madame Trublet, her confidential maid, was kept trotting upstairs to the library on the floor above. She brought down novel after novel. None of them pleased her mistress, and at last sinking even lower, the sublime Madame Grandet, who had always had a horror of Rousseau, was obliged to fall back on *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Everything read aloud to her at the beginning of the night had seemed cold and boring, nothing responded to her mood. But the rather pedantic rhetoric which makes readers with a somewhat fastidious taste close this book, proved just the thing for Madame Grandet's budding sensibility and bourgeois taste.

When she noticed the first light of dawn appear through the cracks of the shutters, she dismissed Madame Trublet. It had suddenly occurred to her that she was sure to receive a letter of excuse the first thing in the morning. "It will be brought to me at nine o'clock, and what an answer he will receive from me! I shan't mince matters!" Slightly calmed by the idea of vengeance, she fell asleep mulling over all the well-rounded sentences of her reply.

As early as eight o'clock Madame Grandet rang impatiently; she thought it was noon.

"My letters, my papers!" she cried petulantly.

The porter was sent for, and arrived with nothing in his hand but the journals in their dirty wrappers. What a contrast to the pretty little note, so elegant and so elegantly folded, which her avid eye looked for in vain among the papers! Lucien was famous for the art with which he folded his notes, and that was perhaps of all his elegant gifts the one which touched her the most.

She spent the whole morning making plans for forgetting Lucien, even for vengeance, but it seemed, nonetheless, interminable. At luncheon she was terrible to the servants and to her husband. Noticing that M. Grandet was in a gay mood, she took an acrimonious delight in telling him M. Leuwen's unvarnished account of his elephantine behavior during his interview with the Marshal, notwithstanding that it had been confided to her under the seal of eternal secrecy.

One o'clock struck . . . half-past-one . . . two o'clock. The reiteration of these sounds, recalling as they did her painful night, infuriated her. For a while she was virtually out of her mind.

All at once (who would have thought it of a character dominated by the most childish vanity?) she had the idea of writing to Lucien. For a whole hour she struggled against this horrible temptation: *to be the first to write!* She yielded at last, but without trying to hide from herself all the horror of her action.

"What an advantage it will give him! And how many days of severity will be necessary to make him forget his feeling of triumph at the sight of my note! But, after all," interposed love, hiding behind a paradox, "what is a lover? It is a friction instrument one scrapes to procure oneself pleasure. As M. Cuvier says: 'Your cat does not caress you when it rubs against you, it caresses itself.' Very well then, the only pleasure this



young man can give me at this moment is that of writing to him. What do his sensations matter to me? Mine will give me pleasure. And," she added with ferocious glee, "*that* is what counts."

Her eyes at that moment were superb.

Madame Grandet wrote a letter. It did not satisfy her. She wrote a second and a third. Finally, she sent off the seventh or eighth which read:

My husband wishes to see you. We are expecting you, and in order not to go on expecting you forever, in spite of our appointment I have decided to write.

My compliments.

Augustine Grandet.

P.S. Come before three o'clock.

And when this letter, the one which seemed the least imprudent and, above all, the least humiliating to her vanity, was finally sent, it was already half-past-two.

Madame Grandet's footman found Lucien in his office in the Rue de Grenelle, looking perfectly serene. Instead of obeying the summons, Lucien wrote:

Madam,

I am doubly unhappy: I shall not have the honor of presenting my respects to you this morning, nor, in all probability, this evening either. I find myself chained to my desk by some pressing business which I was rash enough to undertake. You understand that being a dutiful clerk, I do not want to displease my Minister. But he will certainly never know the extent of the sacrifice I make to duty in not obeying the command of M. Grandet and yourself.

Please accept the renewed assurance of my most respectful devotion.

Lucien Leuwen.

Meanwhile Madame Grandet had been busy calculating the time it would take Lucien to fly to her side. She kept listen-

ing for the sound, now so familiar, of the wheels of his cabriolet, when, suddenly, there was a knock at the door and to her great amazement her footman entered and handed her Lucien's note.

The mere sight of it was enough to reawaken all Madame Grandet's fury; her face became contorted and suffused with a livid red.

"There might be some excuse if he hadn't been in his office. But to have read my letter without immediately rushing to my side . . ."

"Go!" she said to the servant, with a look that petrified him.

"The little fool will probably change his mind," she said to herself. "He will arrive in a quarter of an hour, and it would be better if he saw his letter still unopened. Better still," she decided after a moment, "if he didn't even find me at home."

She rang and ordered her carriage. She began restlessly pacing up and down the room; Lucien's note lay on a little round table by her armchair, and, in spite of herself, she kept glancing at it every time she turned.

Her carriage was announced. As the servant left the room, she snatched up Lucien's note and opened it in a movement of rage without, as it were, consenting to her own action. The woman in her had triumphed over the diplomat.

Lucien's icy letter drove her practically out of her mind. To excuse such weakness, we should like to observe that she had reached the age of twenty-six without ever having been in love before. She had even sternly refrained from indulging in any of those casual flirtations which might lead to love. Now, love was having its revenge. For the last eighteen hours it had been struggling against the most inveterate pride for the heart of this woman whose conduct was so exemplary, whose name was so exalted in the annals of contemporary virtue!

Never was struggle more cruel. At each recurrence of her pain, pride, poor thing, lost ground and was defeated. Ma-

dame Grandet had obeyed it for too long and had grown weary of the kind of pleasure it procured.

At length this long-standing habit and her cruel passion in their struggle for supremacy succeeded, by their united efforts, in driving her to despair. What! A man had eluded, disobeyed, despised her commands!

"But he hasn't the slightest notion of how to behave!"

After two hours of the most atrocious suffering, all the more painful for being experienced for the first time, she finally tried to console herself with the thought of all the flattery, homage and respect she enjoyed, and from the most important men of Paris. For a moment it seemed as though pride would triumph. But suddenly in a fresh outburst of grief, so painful that she could no longer endure passively waiting, she hurried downstairs and got into her carriage. She was scarcely seated when she changed her mind, thinking:

"If he were to come now, I should miss him!" And she gave her footman Lucien's address:

"Rue de Grenelle, the Ministry of the Interior."

She was actually going to seek Lucien in his office.

She refused to reflect on what she was doing. Had she stopped to think, she would have fainted. Prostrated by despair, she lay back on the cushions; being roughly shaken by the jolting of the carriage seemed to act as a diversion, and bring her some relief.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

WHEN LUCIEN SAW Madame Grandet coming into his office, he felt a sudden gust of anger.

"What! Will this woman never leave me in peace! She takes me for one of her numerous flunkeys. From the tone of my letter, she should have known that I had no desire to see her."

Madame Grandet threw herself into an armchair with all the arrogance of a person who, for six years, has been spending a hundred and twenty thousand francs a year. This hint of money in her manner struck Lucien unpleasantly, and destroyed any sympathy he might have felt.

"I am dealing with a grocer's wife *demanding her due*. To be understood I shall have to speak plainly."

Madame Grandet remained silent in her armchair. In a position more bureaucratic than gallant, Lucien sat motionless in his, his hands resting on the arms, his legs stretched out at full length. His expression was exactly that of a merchant who has got the *worst of a bargain*. There was not a sign of any generous sentiment; on the contrary, he showed every evidence of being dominated by inflexible severity, strict justice and self-interest alone.

After a moment, Lucien felt rather ashamed of himself.

"Ah! if Madame de Chasteller should see me now! But, my answer would be: courtesy would only mask what I wish to make this grocer's wife realize."

"Sir," said Madame Grandet at length, "must I beg you to tell your usher to retire?"

Madame Grandet's language tended to glorify all functions.

The person in question was a humble office boy who, seeing a beautiful lady with a fine equipage arrive at the Ministry looking so distraught, was hanging about through curiosity, with the apparent excuse of poking up a fire which had no need of his services. At a glance from Lucien he left the room. The silence continued.

"Well, sir," Madame Grandet finally burst out, "are you not astonished, stupefied, aghast at seeing me here?"

"I confess, Madam, that I am surprised by a certainly very flattering occurrence, but one which I do not deserve."

Lucien had not been able to bring himself to be impolite in words, but the tone in which his remark was spoken was enough to discourage any idea that it was an amorous approach, and made it appear coldly insulting. The affront came just in time to strengthen Madame Grandet's faltering courage. For the first time in her life Madame Grandet was timid, because, during the last few days, her cold and arid heart had known, for the first time, a feeling of tenderness.

"I always thought, sir," she went on in a voice that trembled with anger, "if I have rightly understood your protestations—quite lengthy at times—on the subject of your lofty principles, that you had the pretension of being an honorable man."

"Since you do me so much honor as to speak of me, let me say that I am endeavoring to be just, and to view my position as well as that of others, without flattering myself."

"Will your solicitous *justice* stoop to consider how very dangerous my coming here is? Madame de Vaize might recognize my livery."

"It is precisely because of the danger that I find it difficult to reconcile this action with the idea I have always entertained of Madame Grandet's superior prudence, and the wisdom that permits her to calculate in advance all the circumstances which might render any act more or less useful to her lofty projects."

"Apparently, sir, you have borrowed that rare prudence of

mine, and find it *useful* to alter all those sentiments, so endlessly reiterated, with which I have been daily importuned."

"The devil," thought Lucien, "if I'll be so good-natured as to let you disarm me with your empty phrases."

"Madam," he resumed with the greatest composure, "those sentiments which you do me the honor to remember, have been humiliated by a success not altogether due to them. They have fled blushing in confusion at their mistake, but not before learning the painful truth that they owed their apparent triumph merely to the prosaic promise of an introduction to a Minister. A heart which they had fondly and, of course, erroneously believed they had touched, had really only yielded to calculating ambition, and all the apparent tenderness was merely words. In short, I found out that I had been . . . duped. That is the explanation which my absence was intended to spare you. That, Madam, was my way of being an honorable man."

Madame Grandet did not reply.

"So be it," Lucien said to himself, "I'll make it impossible for you to pretend not to understand." And he added in the same tone:

"No matter with how much unswerving courage a mind that aspires to high positions may endure the qualms which assail vulgar natures, there is a kind of misfortune such a mind cannot endure without chagrin, and that is to have been wrong in one of its calculations. And so, Madam, and I say it with regret and only because you have forced me to do so, perhaps you have been . . . wrong in the role your superior wisdom thought to assign to my inexperience. These, Madam, are the not very agreeable words I had hoped to spare you, believing that I was thus acting as an honorable man. But you have surprised me in my last redoubt—my office. . . ."

Lucien might have gone on indefinitely with this all too simple explanation. Madame Grandet was thunderstruck. The

pains of wounded pride would have been atrocious if, happily for her, a less callous sentiment had not come to soften her suffering. At the fatal, and all too true, words: *introduction to a Minister*, Madame Grandet had covered her eyes with her handkerchief. A moment later, Lucien thought he noticed, in the gilded depths of the ministerial armchair, certain telltale movements of her body. Without even realizing it, Lucien became wary.

"This," he said to himself, "must be the way Parisian actresses reply to reproaches that admit of no answer."

But, in spite of himself, he could not help being somewhat touched by this well-acted imitation of extreme suffering. Besides, the grief-shaken body before his eyes was so beautiful!

In vain, Madame Grandet felt that this fatal discourse of Lucien's should be stopped at any price. He was getting more and more angry at the sound of his own words, and would, perhaps, bind himself to resolutions which had never occurred to him at first. She knew that she should make some sort of reply, but felt incapable of uttering a word.

At last Lucien's discourse, which Madame Grandet had found so interminable, came to an end, whereupon she found that it had ended too soon. She would have to reply, and what could she say? This frightful situation entirely changed her way of feeling. At first she had said to herself out of habit: "What humiliation!" Soon she became insensible to the misery of wounded pride and became aware of a different and much more poignant pain: she was about to lose what had, for the last few days, been her only interest in life! What would her salon mean to her now, and all the pleasures of her brilliant soirées, so highly appreciated by everyone, and frequented by only the best society of the Court of Louis-Philippe?

Madame Grandet knew that Lucien was right. She saw how ill-founded her own anger had been. She had forgotten it. She went even further: she took Lucien's side against herself.

The silence continued for several minutes. Finally, Madame Grandet removed her handkerchief, and Lucien was struck by the most startling change of physiognomy he had ever seen. For perhaps the first time in her life, her face wore an expression that was wholly feminine. Those extraordinarily beautiful features now possessed the added fascination of expressiveness they usually lacked. She had just tossed her hat carelessly aside, and the slight disorder of her hair only added to her charms. And yet, that lovely youthful countenance, which Paul Veronese would have been delighted to have as model, was quite literally painful to Lucien's eyes. To him it bespoke only the prostitute who gloried in being beautiful enough to be able to sell herself for a Ministry. But the greater the wealth, consideration and social advantages she enjoyed, the worse this seemed to him. "How much lower she is than a poor little streetwalker who sells herself to buy bread or a new dress!" And so, Lucien noticed this change in Madame Grandet without being touched by it. At that moment, everything—his father, Madame Grandet, Paris—was anathema to him. Nothing could touch him now except the thought of what might happen to him in Nancy!

"I admit," Madame Grandet said at last, "I am very much to blame. But what has happened is extremely flattering to you. In all my life, except for you, I have never deviated from the path of virtue. Your courtship amused me, flattered me, but seemed to me without the least danger. I was seduced by ambition, I confess, and did not give myself to you out of love. But my heart has changed" (here Madame Grandet blushed deeply and could not look at Lucien), "I have had the misfortune of becoming attached to you. It took only a few days, and without my being conscious of it, for my heart to change. I forgot what I considered my duty—that of elevating the name of Grandet. Another sentiment began to dominate my life. Now the idea of losing you, most of all the idea of losing your



respect, is unbearable. . . . I am ready to sacrifice everything to merit your esteem once more."

With this Madame Grandet buried her face again, and, from behind her handkerchief, found the courage to say:

"I will break with your father, give up all hope of the Ministry . . . but you must not leave me!"

And with a grace he found irresistible, as she said these last words, Madame Grandet held out her hand to Lucien.

"This grace," said Vanity, "this change, amazing in so proud a woman, are entirely due to your attractions. Isn't that better than to have made her yield through the arts of seduction?"

But Lucien remained cool to the flattering voice of Vanity. His expression did not change from one of cold circumspection. And it was now the voice of Skepticism that added:

"Here is a remarkably beautiful woman, and one who counts on the effect of her beauty. Now let's try not to be a dupe. Let's stop to consider. Madame Grandet proves her love for me by a quite painful sacrifice—that of her lifelong pride. So, I should believe in her love . . . but just a moment. This love would have to be proved by somewhat more conclusive and more enduring tests. But if it is real, at least I don't owe it simply to pity. It is not a love inspired by *contagion*, as Ernest says."

It must be admitted that while indulging in these reflections, Lucien's expression was not that of a romantic hero. He had rather the air of a banker weighing the advisability of an important speculation.

"Madame Grandet's vanity," he mused on, "may consider that being jilted is the worst of all calamities, and that she must *sacrifice everything to avoid this humiliation*, even the interests of her ambition. More than likely, it isn't love that is making these sacrifices, but simply vanity, and mine would be blind indeed if it gloried in any such doubtful triumph. The thing to do then is to show the greatest deference and respect.

Her presence here is really most embarrassing. Since I feel incapable of submitting to her demands any longer, and her salon bores me, I must try politely to make her realize the truth.

"Madam," he said, "there will be no change in the respectful devotion I have always shown you. Although the sympathy which for a moment brought us into a relation of intimacy may have been due to a misunderstanding, an error, I am nevertheless everlastingly your debtor. I owe it to myself, Madam, I owe it even more to the tie that united us for a brief moment, to confess the truth. Gratitude and respect still fill my heart, but love, I no longer find in it."

Madame Grandet looked at him with eyes reddened by tears checked now by the intensity with which she hung upon his words.

After a little silence, she began to weep again without restraint. Through her tears she looked up at Lucien, and dared pronounce these extraordinary words:

"Everything you say is true. I was dying of ambition and pride. Finding myself so immensely rich, my one aim in life—I dare confess this bitter absurdity to you—was to have a title. I gave myself to you through ambition alone. But now I am dying of love. I am unworthy, I know. Humiliate me . . . I deserve your scorn. I am dying of love and shame. I am at your feet; I beg your forgiveness; I have no more ambition, no more pride. In the future tell me what you want me to do. I am at your feet, humiliate me all you like! The more you humiliate me, the more human you will be to me."

"Is all this still affectation?" Lucien asked himself. He had never before witnessed a scene of such violence.

She had thrown herself at his feet. Stooping, Lucien was trying to lift her when, suddenly, he felt the arms in his hands go limp, and soon he was holding the whole weight of her inanimate body. Madame Grandet had fainted.

Lucien was embarrassed but not moved. His embarrassment came entirely from the fear of failing in this precept of his moral code: *never to hurt anyone unnecessarily*. But a recollection, utterly ridiculous at such a moment, suddenly drove away all idea of compassion. Two days before, Madame Grandet, who owned an estate near Lyons, had been approached for a contribution to the collection being raised in behalf of the unhappy Lyons prisoners who had taken part in the April insurrection, and who were to be tried in Paris. They were to be brought from Lyons to the Perrache prison in Paris in open carts, thinly clad, in the middle of winter.

"I must say that I find your request extraordinary, sir," she had replied to the men making the collection. "You are apparently not aware of the fact that my husband is connected with the government, and Monsieur le Préfet of Lyons has forbidden this collection!"

She herself had recounted the incident in her drawing room to her assembled guests. Lucien had looked at her in amazement before remarking:

"In such weather, many of those poor wretches will die of cold in their carts; they have nothing but summer clothing, and are not given blankets."

"What of it?" cried a fat Deputy and a July hero. "All the less trouble for the Paris Court."

Lucien had kept his eyes fixed on Madame Grandet: she remained unmoved.

Seeing her now in a state of unconsciousness, her features devoid of all expression except that of her habitual haughtiness, he remembered the same impassive look on her face when he had spoken of the prisoners dying of cold on the road. And even in the midst of a love scene, he remained a republican.

"What am I going to do with this woman?" he asked him-

self. "One must be human. I must give her some good advice and, at all costs, get her home."

He propped her gently against the armchair, and went to lock the door. Then, dipping his handkerchief into a plain china pitcher full of water (the only household utensil the office afforded), he moistened her forehead, cheeks and neck, without all this beauty having the slightest effect upon him.

"If I wanted to take a mean advantage, I would call Desbacs to the rescue! He keeps all sorts of smelling salts in his desk."

At length, Madame Grandet gave a little sigh.

"She mustn't find herself on the floor," thought Lucien. "It would remind her of the painful scene."

He lifted her up bodily in his arms, and placed her in the great gilded armchair. This time, the contact of this charming body did, at least, remind him that he was holding in his arms and had at his disposal, one of the most beautiful women of Paris. And her beauty, not being dependent on expression or charm, but a *sterling* and plastic beauty, lost almost nothing in this state of unconsciousness.

Madame Grandet roused slightly, and looked at Lucien through half-open eyes, the upper eyelid being still too weak to open fully.

Lucien decided that the thing to do now was to kiss her hand, and nothing could have more effectually hastened the resurrection of this lovesick woman.

"You will come to see me, won't you?" she murmured in a hardly audible voice.

"Yes, of course. You may count on it. But now it is too dangerous for you to remain here. The door is closed, someone might knock; young Desbacs, perhaps, might come . . ."

The thought of that malicious young man seemed to restore Madame Grandet's strength at once.

"Will you be good enough to help me to my carriage?"

"Don't you think it might be a good idea to say something about a sprained ankle to your servants?"

"Oh, generous friend! You are not the kind of man to wish to compromise me, and to flaunt your triumph. How good you are!"

Lucien felt touched, and was annoyed with himself for his weakness. Taking the hand that was resting on his arm, he placed it on the back of the armchair, and hurried down to the courtyard.

"Madame Grandet," he said to the servants in a tone of concern, "has just twisted her ankle. A bone may be broken. Come quickly!"

One of the Ministry attendants held the horses while Madame Grandet's coachman and footman hastily followed Lucien, and helped Madame Grandet to her carriage.

With all the little strength she had regained, she pressed Lucien's hand. Her eyes grown eloquent again, eloquent with supplication, she said to him from inside the carriage:

"Until tonight!"

"Of course, dear Madam, I shall call to find out how you are."

Amazed at the strange agitation of their mistress, her servants were suspicious of the whole thing. These people become very wise in Paris. They knew well enough that hers was a distress due to something else than mere physical pain.

Lucien locked himself in his office once more. With long strides, he paced from one corner of the room to the other.

"What an unpleasant scene!" he said to himself. "Was it put on? Did she exaggerate her feelings? The fainting fit was real enough . . . as far as I can judge. That would seem to be a triumph for my vanity; I don't even feel pleased."

He tried to go on with a report he had begun, but soon perceived that he was writing nonsense. He went home, mounted his horse, rode over the Grenelle bridge, and soon found him-

self in the Meudon woods. There, reining in his horse to a walk, he began to think. What remained, above all else, was remorse at having been touched when Madame Grandet had lowered the handkerchief from before her face, and worse still, at having been affected for a moment when he had lifted her unconscious form in his arms, and placed it in the armchair.

"Ah! if I am unfaithful to Madame de Chasteller, she will have reason to be unfaithful to me."

"It seems to me," the opposition retorted, "she hasn't made a bad start. Having a baby . . . a mere trifle!"

"Since nobody knows," replied Lucien resentfully, "there's no ridicule attached to it. Ridicule has to be apparent, or it doesn't exist."

Returning to town, Lucien went straight to the Ministry. He had himself announced to M. de Vaize, and asked for a month's leave of absence. The Minister, who for the last three weeks had been only half a Minister and had kept praising the pleasures of repose (*otium cum dignitate*, as he often said) was surprised and altogether delighted at the flight of the enemy's aide-de-camp.

"I wonder what it means?" he asked himself.

Armed with his leave of absence in proper form, written by himself and signed by the Minister, Lucien went to say good-bye to his mother. To her he spoke only of a little jaunt to the country.

"Where in the country," she anxiously asked.

"Normandy," replied Lucien, for he understood very well that look on his mother's face.

The slight remorse he had felt at deceiving so excellent a mother was dispelled by her question: "Where in the country?"

"My mother hates Madame de Chasteller," he said to himself, and that settled everything.

Leaving a line for his father, he rode over to Madame Gran-

det's whom he found still quite weak. He behaved with the utmost courtesy, and promised to return in the evening.

In the evening, regretting nothing in Paris and hoping with all his heart to be forgotten by Madame Grandet, Lucien departed for Nancy.

*[Stendhal once more leaves numerous blank pages to be filled in later with an account of this second flight of Lucien's to Nancy. It was never written.]*

## CHAPTER THIRTY

**F**OLLOWING THE SUDDEN DEATH of M. Leuwen, Lucien returned to Paris. He spent an hour with his mother before going to the bank. M. Reffre, the judicious gray-haired manager and an experienced man of affairs, even before speaking of his employer's death, said to Lucien:

"I must talk to you about your affairs, sir. But perhaps we'd best go into your private office, if you don't mind."

They had barely entered the room, when he began:

"You are a man—and a brave man. You must be prepared for the worst. Will you permit me to speak frankly?"

"Of course, my dear M. Reffre. Tell me plainly the very worst."

"You will have to go into bankruptcy."

"Great God! How much do we owe?"

"Just exactly what we have. If you don't go into bankruptcy, you will have nothing left."

"Isn't there some way to avoid bankruptcy?"

"To be sure, but then you wouldn't even have a hundred thousand pounds, and besides, it might take from five to six years to realize the whole amount."

"Wait here for me a moment. I want to consult my mother."

"But your mother knows nothing about business, sir. Perhaps it would be better not to mention the word bankruptcy. You could, you know, pay sixty per cent, and still be comfortably well-off. Your father was loved by everyone in the business world. There isn't a little shopkeeper who hasn't, at one time or another, received a couple of banknotes of a thousand francs from him. You will have your certificate of bankruptcy for sixty per cent signed within three days, even before the books are audited. And," added M. Reffre, lowering his voice, "all the business transactions of the last nineteen days are entered in a separate book that I lock up every evening. We have sugar to the amount of one million one hundred thousand francs, but without this book no one can find them."

"And this," said Lucien to himself, "is a perfectly honest man."

Seeing him so thoughtful, M. Reffre added:

"M. Lucien has somewhat lost the habit of the banking business since he has enjoyed such great honors. He no doubt attaches to the word bankruptcy the false idea held in society. M. Van Peters, whom you were so fond of, went into bankruptcy in New York, and was so little dishonored that our largest business has been with New York and all North America."

During this speech, Lucien was thinking: "I shall have to find a job." But M. Reffre, believing he had convinced Lucien, went on:

"You could even offer forty per cent, and I have arranged everything with that in mind. Should any disgruntled creditors try to force our hand, you will reduce them to thirty-five. But, as I see it, forty per cent would not be strictly honorable. Offer sixty per cent, and still Madame Leuwen will not be obliged to give up her carriage. Madame Leuwen without her carriage! There isn't one of us who wouldn't be pierced to the heart at such a spectacle! There's not one of us who has not received



presents from your father amounting to more than his salary."

Still trying to think how the true state of affairs could be kept from his mother, Lucien remained silent.

"There's not one of us," M. Reffre went on in the same vein, "who is not determined that you and your mother shall be able to count on six hundred thousand francs. And besides," he added, raising his black eyebrows over his little eyes by way of emphasis, "even if none of the others should acquiesce, even if they should prove traitors, I, who am their chief, say that you will have six hundred thousand francs as surely as though you held them in your hands at this very moment, as well as all the household furnishings, silver, and so forth."

"Please wait for me here, M. Reffre!" was all Lucien replied.

He was shocked by this reference to the furniture and silver. He seemed to be seeing himself dividing the loot in a robbery.

After a somewhat prolonged quarter of an hour, quite ten minutes of which was spent preparing his mother for the news, he returned to M. Reffre. Like Lucien, his mother had a horror of bankruptcy and had offered to sacrifice her dowry, amounting to one hundred and fifty thousand francs, requesting only a life annuity of twelve hundred francs for herself, and twelve hundred francs for her son.

M. Reffre was dumfounded by their decision to pay their creditors in full. He begged Lucien to take twenty-four hours to reconsider.

"That is the one thing, my dear M. Reffre, I cannot grant you."

"Well then, M. Lucien, don't breathe a word of our conversation. This is a secret between Madame Leuwen, you and myself. The other employees have only the faintest idea of the situation."

"Good-by then, my dear Reffre, until tomorrow. My mother and I look upon you, nonetheless, as our best friend."

The next day, M. Reffre renewed his offers. He begged

Lucien to consent to go into bankruptcy, giving even ninety per cent to the creditors. A day later, after another refusal, he said to Lucien:

"The name of the banking-house can be turned to good account, provided all debts are paid . . . here is a complete list," and he handed Lucien a huge sheet of grand-eagle paper covered with figures. "Meanwhile, I, Jean-Pierre Reffre, and M. Gavardin (the cashier) are prepared to offer you one hundred thousand francs cash, and guarantee to pay all outstanding debts left by M. Leuwen, our honored chief, no matter of what sort, even his tailor's or his saddler's bills."

"Your proposition pleases me enormously," replied Lucien. "I should rather deal with you, my good and honest friend, for one hundred thousand francs than receive one hundred and fifty thousand from anyone else, who might not have the same regard for my father's good name. I make only one request: give M. Coffe an interest in the firm."

"I must be frank with you, M. Lucien. To work with M. Coffe mornings takes away my appetite for dinner. He is a thoroughly worthy man, but just the sight of him brings bad luck. However, it will never be said that the House of Reffre and Gavardin refused a request made by a Leuwen. To sum up our purchase price: one hundred thousand francs in cash, a twelve hundred franc annuity for Madame Leuwen, and the same for her son, all the furniture, silver, linen, horses, carriages and anything else you care to keep. All this is fully set forth here in this agreement. I want you to show it to a man whom all Paris respects, and who is spoken of with veneration in all business circles: M. Laffitte. And now," he continued, going over to the desk, "I shall add a life annuity for M. Coffe."

The whole transaction was completed in the same frank and loyal manner. Lucien consulted his father's friends. Several, when he pressed them for their opinion, blamed him for not going into bankruptcy with sixty per cent to the creditors.

"You can't be paupers, after all," they said; "no one will want to receive you."

Lucien and his mother had not hesitated for a second. The agreement was signed with MM. Reffre and Gavardin. Madame Leuwen received an annuity of four thousand francs instead of twelve hundred, one of the other employees having offered the additional amount. With this one exception, the agreement contained all the clauses mentioned above. M. Leuwen's two old employees paid one hundred thousand francs cash, and the same day Madame Leuwen put up for sale horses, carriages and silver services. Her son made no objection. He told her that he would not hear of taking anything but his annuity and twenty thousand francs of the capital.

During these transactions Lucien saw scarcely anyone. Unshaken though he was by the loss of his fortune, the commiseration of most of his acquaintances would have exasperated him.

The effect of the calumnies spread by the Comte de Beau-sobre was soon apparent. The public believed that the change in his fortunes in no way troubled Lucien's tranquillity because he was, at heart, a Saint-Simonian. If he didn't have this religion, they said, he would have invented another.

Lucien was altogether amazed when a letter arrived from Madame Grandet, who was staying at a country house in Saint-Germain, fixing an appointment with him in Versailles, at 62 Rue de Savoie.

Lucien was on the point of excusing himself when he thought:

"After all, I've behaved rather shabbily toward her. I'd better sacrifice one more half hour."

He found a woman quite desperately in love, and almost without strength enough to speak intelligibly. She did manage however, with remarkable adroitness and delicacy, to make him the following scandalous proposition: she begged him to

accept an income of twelve thousand francs and, in return, asked only that he should come to see her (intentions purely honorable) four times a week.

"All the rest of my time I shall spend waiting for you."

Lucien saw that if he made the reply her offer invited, he would only provoke a violent scene. To avoid this, he told her vaguely that for certain reasons such an arrangement could, in any case, not begin for six weeks, but that he promised within twenty-four hours to give her his answer in writing. In spite of all his precautions, this unhappy meeting did not end without tears, and lasted for two hours and a quarter.

Previous to this trip to Versailles, Lucien had been engaged in a very different sort of negotiation with the old Marshal who, on the point of losing his portfolio for the last four months, was still Minister of War. Several days before, one of the Marshal's officers called upon Lucien to ask him, in the Minister's name, to be at the Ministry of War at six-thirty the next morning.

Still half-asleep, Lucien kept the appointment. He found the old Marshal looking like a sick country priest.

"Well, young man," the old gentleman began in a gruff voice, "*sic transit gloria mundi!* Another one ruined! Good God, one doesn't know what to do with one's money these days. There's nothing really safe but land, and the farmers never pay you. Is it true that you refused to go into bankruptcy? And that you sold your banking-house for a hundred thousand francs?"

"Perfectly true, Marshal."

"I knew your father, and while I'm still in this penitentiary, I am going to ask His Majesty for a six or eight thousand franc post for you. Where do you want to be?"

"Far away from Paris."

"Ah, I see, you want a Prefecture. But I refuse to owe any-

thing to that scoundrel de Vaize. . . . And so, *nothing like that, my Larrirette*," and he began singing the last words.

"I was not thinking of a Prefecture. Out of France, I meant to say."

"Better speak frankly between friends. The devil! We're not here to be diplomatic. All right—Secretary of an Embassy?"

"I am not entitled to be First Secretary. I know nothing of the duties of the office, and, as I have only twelve hundred francs a year, Attaché wouldn't be enough."

"I will make you, not first nor last, but second. M. le Chevalier Leuwen, Master of Petitions, cavalry Lieutenant! and he says he's not *entitled*! Write me tomorrow and let me know if you want to be Second Secretary or not."

And the Marshal dismissed him with a wave of his hand, saying:

"Honor!"

The following day Lucien, who for form's sake had consulted his mother, wrote to tell the Marshal that he accepted his offer.

Returning from Versailles, he found a note from the Marshal's aide-de-camp asking Lucien to be at the Ministry the same evening at nine o'clock. Lucien did not delay.

"I have asked His Majesty for the post of Second Secretary to the Embassy at Capel for you," the Marshal began. "If the King signs, you will have a salary of four thousand francs, and in addition, a pension in recognition of the services rendered by your late father without whom my law on — would never have passed. I don't say that this pension is as solid as marble—but still, it ought to last at least five years, and in four or five years, if you serve your Ambassador as well as you have served de Vaize, and if you hide your Jacobin opinions (it was the King told me you were a Jacobin)—in short if you are clever, before the pension of four thousand francs is suppressed

you will be getting six or eight thousand in salary. That's more than a Colonel gets. And so, good luck and good-by. I have paid my debt. Never ask me for anything else, and don't write me."

As Lucien turned to go, the old Marshal added:

"If you haven't received anything from the Rue Neuve-des-Capucines in a week, come back here at nine o'clock in the evening. As you go out tell the porter that you are coming back in a week. Good evening. Good-by."

There was nothing to hold Lucien in Paris. He did not wish to return until his misfortune had been forgotten.

"What!" all the imbeciles in the foyer of the Opera exclaimed. "You, who had a right to expect millions!"

And several persons bowed to him in a way that plainly said: "Don't speak to us."

His mother had displayed great force of character and an attitude in the very best taste. Never a complaint. She could have kept her magnificent home eighteen months longer. But before Lucien's departure she had settled down in an apartment of four rooms on the third floor of a house on the Boulevard. She sent announcements to a small circle of friends that she would be at home Fridays for tea, and that, during the time of her mourning, she would see no one on any other day.

The eighth day after his last interview with the Marshal, Lucien was wondering whether he should call on him again or not, when a large packet was brought to him addressed: *M. le Chevalier Leuwen, Second Secretary to the Embassy at Capel*. Lucien went immediately to the embroiderer to see about his uniform. He called on his Minister, received a quarter of his salary in advance, and, at the Ministry, studied the correspondence of the Embassy of Capel, except for the confidential letters. Everyone talked to him about buying a carriage but,

three days after receiving his nomination, he bravely left by the mail coach, and heroically resisted the temptation of going to his new post via Nancy, Bâle and Milan.

He stayed for two delightful days on the Lake of Geneva, visiting all the places made famous by *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. At Clarens, in a peasant's cottage he came across an embroidered bed-set which had belonged to Madame de Warens.

The complete apathy which had so distressed him in Paris (hardly the place for receiving condolences) now gave way to a gentle melancholy: he was going far away from Nancy, perhaps forever!

This sadness opened his heart to the emotions of art. With more pleasure than befits an ignoramus, he visited Milan, Saronno and the Charterhouse of Pavia. Bologna and Florence threw him into a state of emotion and enthusiasm which would, three years before, have caused him the greatest remorse.

And when, finally, he arrived at his post at Capel, he had to lecture himself severely in order to adopt toward the people he was about to see a proper degree of coldness.

#### STENDHAL'S NOTE FOR THE END OF LUCIEN LEUWEN

*Madame de Chasteller and Lucien are married while Lucien still believes that she has had a child. After their marriage in Paris: "You are mine," she cries as she covers him with kisses. "Now you must go to Nancy. And you must go at once, sir, at once! You know, alas, how my father detests me. Question him, question everybody! Then write to me. When your letters show that you are convinced (and you know that I am a good*

*judge) then come back to me—but not till then. I shall certainly be able to distinguish the philosophy of a sensible man willing to pardon a fault which antedates his lease, and the natural impatience of a lover, from the sincere conviction of that heart which I adore!" At the end of a week Lucien returns.—End of novel.*



# APPENDIX

FEBRUARY, 22, '35.—Chronology.—Outline for me; I write it out solely for the purpose of avoiding contradictions in the little words describing the seasons or anything else. Probably the exact dates will remain vague. Nothing ages a novel so much as the last digit of a date. Thus in the text, instead of 1835, say 183-.

The essential periods in chronological order: eleven months in Nancy (three of boredom, eight of love), nine in the Ministry of the Interior in order to become, and prove to the world that he has become, a worker. Opening of the Chamber after the revolt of November.

Lucien leaves Paris for Nancy, April 25, 1833.

After a stay of eleven months in the provinces, he returns to Paris, March 25, 1834.

Seven months later, he leaves for the elections, Blois, Caen, etc., October 25, 1834. (In Nancy they were beginning to prepare for the elections seven months ago—that's stretching the point a bit.)

His father's stupid confession of his bargain with Madame Gran-det, December 1834, nine months after Lucien's first return from Nancy.

Lucien's third trip to Nancy: January 24, 1835. Ministerial crisis in January or February. There had been a short trip to Nancy in-cognito, like Dominique's [Stendhal's name for himself] to Renne. Sentimental journey undertaken out of curiosity. He had not yet forgiven her for the baby; he forgives her November, 1834.

I write out the plan after having written the story . . . to make the plan first freezes me, because after that, memory is the active agent instead of the heart.

\*

\*

\*